UM Curators to discuss tuition, fees

By Megan Favignano

Wednesday, December 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri Board of Curators on Thursday will hear recommendations for fiscal year 2017 tuition and supplemental fee rates that would keep resident undergraduate tuition flat while increasing student fees.

The curators will discuss tuition and fees at their regularly scheduled meeting, which is set for Thursday and Friday at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

The proposal keeps resident undergraduate tuition flat based on Gov. Jay Nixon’s recommendation, according to board documents. Nixon’s budget proposal includes a 6 percent funding increase and a tuition freeze for higher education.

The Forum on Graduate Rights, a student advocacy group, has been pushing for MU to waive supplemental fees for graduate student workers. Anahita Zare, public relations chairwoman for the group, said course fees can put a significant financial burden on students. That burden, she said, makes it difficult for graduate assistants to focus on their work conducting research and teaching undergraduate classes for the university.

“We hope that when the curators look at potential fee increases, they keep in mind these are not accompanied with any stipend increase,” Zare said.

Among the largest supplemental fee increases in the recommendations are increases of $5 to $6.40 per credit hour in the College of Arts and Science, the Trulaske College of Business and the Sinclair School of Nursing.

“These requests are based on academic and funding needs of the colleges and schools as well as market realities,” the recommendation to the board says.

Zare mentioned the College of Engineering’s fee as one example of an already high course fee. MU’s proposal calls for a $2.50 per credit hour increase to the engineering course fee, which would cost students $84.90 per credit hour.

While the proposal keeps undergraduate tuition flat, it does specify some professional school program tuition increases, including MU’s law school, medical school and veterinary school.
Final tuition and fee recommendations go before the curators for approval in the spring.

Aside from tuition and fees, the curators will hear proposals this week for two new degrees at MU: a master of laws in American law and a master’s degree in data science and analytics. The law program would give students who received a law degree outside of the United States an introduction to the American legal system. The data science and analytics program would prepare students with various academic backgrounds to work as data scientists. Curators will vote on both degree proposals Thursday.

The board’s agenda also includes a review of fall enrollment numbers and annual reports on MU Health Care and the system’s research and economic development.

During Friday’s meeting, interim UM System President Mike Middleton will deliver his first report to the Board of Curators. The UM System president typically addresses the board at its regular meetings. Curators named Middleton interim president last month after former UM System President Tim Wolfe resigned after weeks of protests over the racial climate at MU.

UM System spokesman John Fougere said student input from a recent listening session the curators held at MU will help shape discussions of the president’s annual goals and the work of a task force on diversity, equity and inclusion.

In an interview last week, Middleton said the system was summarizing student concerns and suggestions from that listening session.

“That will be a guide for how we move forward in addressing their concerns,” Middleton said. “I’m not certain at this point that every suggestion made can be accomplished, but I fully intend to address every suggestion.”

UM System Board of Curators to hold meeting in St. Louis

Columbia, MO — The University of Missouri System Board of Curators will hold their last meeting of the year Thursday and Friday at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.
Interim University of Missouri System President Mike Middleton will make his first presidential report at the meeting.

This is Middleton's first regular Board of Curators meeting since he was appointed as interim president.

Middleton was appointed as interim president after Tim Wolfe stepped down amid racial tensions on campus.

UM System Chief Communications Operating Officer, John Fougere, said Middleton has talked about the work the system needs to do.

"He's ready to address the board for the first time," Fougere said. "You know one of the things we've been saying is the University of Missouri System...one of the most important things we can do right now is work to restore confidence with all our various constituencies that can be external and internal so the president will be updating the board on some of those initial initiatives that we are working on since he took over as president."

With what has happened over the last month, moving forward Fougere said they want to make sure others know the system has continued to grow and serve six million Missourians throughout the process.

"The president wants people to know that we're going to work to regain that confidence and let them know also that this has always been an asset in 176 year history of this university and it's going to continue to be and we're going to work through these challenges," Fougere said. "The president is rolling up his sleeves and getting to work."

Also at the meeting, Yvonne Sparks will take the oath of office and will officially join the board.

They will discuss tuition fees and will hear annual reports on finances and healthcare.

The 2016 board leadership will also be voted on where a new board chair and vice chair will be selected.
New Orleans may remove long-standing Confederate monuments

Dec. 9, 2015 • By CAIN BURDEAU

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Prominent Confederate monuments long taken for granted on the streets of this Deep South city may be coming down as allegiance to Confederate symbols slowly erodes in the South and blacks across the nation demand an end to racism and police brutality.

This week and next, the New Orleans City Council will take up the issue of removing four monuments linked to Confederate history. A vote is set for next week and it looks as though a majority of the council favors their removal despite stiff opposition.

Mayor Mitch Landrieu first called for taking down the monuments following the June mass shooting at the African-American Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, by a white supremacist that left nine parishioners dead.

"It became impossible to ignore the dangers that are inherent in allowing those symbols to stand and to give them pride of place across the South," said Randy Sparks, a Tulane University historian who specializes in Southern history. "That shooting brought it home in a way that people could no longer ignore."

In the shooting's aftermath, Confederate symbols have been falling out of favor fast — and in many places being removed from public sight.

In South Carolina, a Confederate battle flag was removed from the Capitol grounds. In Mississippi, colleges have opted to stop flying the state flag because it includes the Confederate emblem. The University of Texas has removed a statue of Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president.

The push to remove racially charged symbolism has fused, too, with the outrage over police shootings of unarmed blacks and lingering patterns of racism — a current movement embodied by the group Black Lives Matter and student protests, such as what happened at the University of Missouri that led to the resignation of the college system president.

In the South, allegiance to Confederate symbols has been slowly eroding, according to David Butler, a human geographer at Southern Mississippi University.

"It's a generational thing," he said. "I would say since Generation X and onwards, the connection is not there."

With globalization and exposure to other cultures and places, he said younger Southerners simply don't feel that bond with the Confederate past.

The New Orleans mayor's proposal is bold as it takes aim at some well-known landmarks that have stood where they are for a century or longer.

Poised for removal is a statue of Confederate commander Robert E. Lee standing atop a tall column in a busy traffic circle; also an imposing statue of P.G.T. Beauregard, the Confederate general, mounted on a horse in the center of another traffic circle at the entrance to City Park could be struck from the cityscape.

A statue of Davis, the Confederate president, and an obelisk dedicated to the Crescent City White League, white supremacists who sought to topple the biracial government after the Civil War, are the other two monuments the mayor wants off the city streets.
Still, the Confederacy debate stirs passions in the South — and New Orleans is proof of that.

Due to high level of interest, the City Council has put aside Thursday afternoon to hear an outpouring from citizens both for and against the removal of the monuments. Next Thursday it has scheduled a special meeting to vote on the removal ordinance.

On Tuesday, a volunteer group that looks after monuments across the city said it had collected about 31,000 signatures of people opposed to the removal of the monuments.

"The word Confederate has become a buzzword for ugly," said Pierre McGraw, the president of the Monumental Task Committee Inc., the monuments group.

"But a lot of us were Confederates," he added. "New Orleans was part of the Confederacy. For a lot of people, these people were heroes. It looks like we are sanitizing history. Where does it end?"

For the Rev. Jim VanderWeele, a Unitarian minister, the end can't come soon enough. He was one of dozens of pastors from a cross-section of faiths that demanded the removal of the monuments in August.

"Equity has been denied," he said, "and one symbol of that denial is that we lift up symbols of people who supported slavery."

Race by the numbers

Taking a data-based look at race at MU

A lack of racial diversity among students and faculty has been cited time and again as something that needs to change at MU. While the university is making attempts to improve inclusivity, numbers show that the campus population is still overwhelmingly white. Here’s how the numbers behind the criticism actually break down.


This fall, MU’s enrollment grew to about 35,000 students. Most MU minority populations increased along with overall enrollment. Over 1,000 more black students attend MU now than in 2014. White students saw the largest net increase in the past nine years, growing by 4,346 students. The number of Native American students decreased by 92, and students who chose not to report their race information decreased by 520.

In 2005, black students were 5 percent of the student body. In 2014, black students were 7 percent, and the percentage is the same this year.
In 2005, white students were 81 percent of the student body. In 2014, white students were 76 percent of the student body. In 2015, white students make up 75 percent.

The amount of non-resident international students continues to increase at MU, this year filling 7 percent of the student body.

ACT scores of MU students
Average ACT composites of MU enrollees by race (per subjects in 2013 Arcidiacono and Koedel study).
The highest possible score is 36.

22.25
Black students

25.88
White students

66%
Graduation rate for black students at MU

68.7%
Overall graduation rate at MU

The study also examined colleges across Missouri and predicted the following graduation rates:

61.1%
White men

66.2%
White women

43.0%
In October, the Academic Affairs Committee raised the minimum English proficiency requirements for non-native English speaking students. The most common indicator of proficiency used in higher education is the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL.

61

MU’s current TOEFL minimum for admission. This is tied with the University of Arizona for the lowest such requirement among members in the Association of American Universities. A minimum of 79 has been proposed for MU.

88.73

Average TOEFL score for AAU members

Individual schools within MU would maintain the right to require higher TOEFL scores for students. The current requirements for the Internet-based test, by school:

61

College of Arts and Science

College of Engineering

College of Agriculture, Food and Resources

School of Natural Resources

College of Human Environmental Sciences

100

College of Education
RACE IN GREEK LIFE

Starting in 2015, all MU fraternities and sororities must submit documentation that their chapter held an intercultural/cross-cultural education session and at least 60 percent of chapter members attended.

Before 2015, this session was recommended, but documentation was not required.

Neither the Interfraternity Council nor the Panhellenic Association monitor diversity statistics.

Of the nine MU chapters in the National Pan-Hellenic Council, an association of historically black Greek organizations, eight are on restrictive status, meaning they must attend regular meetings with the Office of Greek Life to work toward meeting the minimum standards of diversity, member development and philanthropy, according to the MU Fraternity and Sorority Standards of Excellence.

MU TENURE/TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

The distribution of tenure and tenure-track professors changes less often than full-time faculty because of employment standards of tenure. Still, demographic shifts are clear.
Race  

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<td>40 / 3.43%</td>
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<td>6 / 0.05%</td>
<td>11 / 1.01%</td>
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Speech Crimes on Campus

The First Amendment makes a comeback at some universities.

The student censors at Yale claimed a scalp—pardon the micro-aggression—this week when lecturer Erika Christakis resigned her teaching position on childhood education. She had been pilloried for asking in an email if students weren’t too sensitive if they are offended by politically incorrect Halloween costumes.

Yale’s powers-that-be ducked and covered in response, but the news on campus isn’t all bad, according to a forthcoming report by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (Fire). The foundation’s annual survey of 440 colleges—comprising 336 four-year public and 104 private institutions—finds that the share of schools maintaining “severely restrictive” speech codes has dropped to below 50% (49.3%) for the first time in the organization’s history. As many as three-quarters of colleges boasted restrictive speech codes in 2007 and 55% did as of last year.
Another positive sign: The number of schools receiving Fire’s highest “green light” rating has nearly tripled since 2006 to 22, up from 18 last year. These beacons include Purdue University, the University of Virginia and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. More than twice as many colleges have received ratings upgrades as downgrades this year.

Some colleges have reaffirmed, in principle, their commitment to free speech. In January the University of Chicago endorsed “the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas” are perceived as offensive. Princeton adopted a similar resolution in April while Johns Hopkins in September identified “free and independent inquiry” as one of its “core principles.”

**The state of Missouri this year enacted the Campus Free Expression Act barring public colleges from restricting speech to prescribed zones on campus.** Ironically, University of Missouri protesters this fall benefitted from this First Amendment protection while seeking to muzzle (and muscle) dissident voices. As the conflagration of free speech at Mizzou showed, colleges often contravene the law and their stated principles.

Princeton prohibits “offensive” sexual comments while Johns Hopkins forbids “rude, disrespectful behavior.” At Boise State University, students may not publish, display or transmit “inappropriate or offensive material.” That could apply to just about every student’s Facebook page and Instagram.

The University of South Dakota proscribes bullying, which—don’t laugh—is loosely defined as “teasing, making fun of, laughing at or harassing someone over time.” Middlebury College’s code of civility censures “flagrant disrespect for persons.” Wesleyan even grants students “the right to be protected against actions that may be harmful to the health or emotional stability of the individual.”

Trigger warning: The First Amendment protects offensive, distasteful and derisive remarks. Public colleges can’t punish micro-aggressions any more than the Justice Department can prosecute Donald Trump’s oafish comments. While private institutions may promulgate restrictive codes of conduct, doing so chills free expression and inquiry. These have long been the bedrocks of higher education.

Censorship on campus will take time to beat back, but the latest Fire report shows that opposition is showing some progress. We’re glad to have them on the case.
The Necessary Recklessness of Campus Protests

Progress against racial injustice is stagnant, yet the demands of student activists are still widely dismissed.

I remember wanting to leave. One of us wanted to go to the University of Pennsylvania; another friend talked about going to school in Maryland. My friend and I would be at Duke by spring semester. I told a senior about our collective plans to transfer out of Princeton and he said: “Everyone says that freshman year; no one actually leaves.”

We weren’t special. We were only the latest in a lineage that felt some kind of discomfort and sought escape. The senior had thought the same thing his first semester. He tried to identify it like we did. We tried to root what we felt in parties that didn’t play music we liked, in very strange and palpably elitist traditions, in buildings with names of men who did not want us there. I had a transfer application open on my computer because I wanted one of my friends to see it and laugh. We knew we weren’t going anywhere, that we were lucky to be there; so we had been told. I remember telling it to myself. Sometimes I still do. And when later, we heard the same complaints, the same desires from other black underclassmen, I remembered what we were told our first year. That senior was right. None of us left.

Over the past few weeks, college students in the U.S. and abroad have turned into activists, demonstrating against racial injustice on their campuses. Critiques, of course, pursue these protests. A large portion focus on behaviors they term reckless. They single out Jonathan Butler’s hunger strike at the University of Missouri, a $1 million refusal by Mizzou’s football team, students at Princeton calling for the removal of Woodrow Wilson’s name from campus buildings, the demand for safe spaces on campus, or the demand for media-free safe spaces in public areas. The word used, though, is rarely “reckless.” It is “coddled,” “sensitive,” or plainly, “enough.”

The critics claim that students’ demands are unnecessary, and the nature of their demanding unwarranted. So, logically, the protests themselves are reckless. They become the reckless expressions of over-emotional, over-reactive kids, bloated on political correctness, with a poor grasp of the First Amendment. The collective impact of this type of critical response is rarely discourse, it’s dismissal.

The poet Claudia Rankine, in her essay describing the “condition of black life [as] one of mourning,” wrote: “When blacks become overwhelmed by our culture’s disorder and protest (ultimately to our own detriment, because protest gives the police justification to militarize, as they did in Ferguson), the wrongheaded question that is asked is, What kind of savages are we? Rather than, What kind of country do we live in?”

The night Darren Wilson was not indicted for the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, about 300 students marched around Princeton’s campus, chanting for justice and
peace. I remember a white student blowing cigarette smoke in the faces of marchers who passed close to him. I remember that my friend and I were shocked as we passed him. A few days later, I remembered a black-and-white picture I’d seen growing up in high school textbooks, in documentaries on the civil-rights movement. It’s of a young black man blowing smoke in a black girl’s face, to prepare her for what she would likely face at a sit-in. It’s from 1960.

The reckless demands made by the student protesters to their universities constitute recognition of what progress actually isn’t.

The students are demanding them to imagine: What is it like to enter a building or look at a mural of someone who did not think you good or human enough to be in that building, to be looking at that mural? I did this for my last two years at Princeton, as a major in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. My friends and I made jokes about reparations when we turned in our theses to the Wilson School. We had been reminded by the name for two years, and by the school for four, that we were there, but Princeton was not ours. We carved out our spaces and moved through, ending up with T-shirts that said Woodrow Wilson in cursive scribble across the front, us wondering if this was winning. I wondered why we had to be at war at all.

The protesters’ demand isn’t to excise the pain endemic to being in a space where they were once not allowed. That’s impossible; it is history. It’s that university administrations work to understand inclusion as a step. Left alone, as it has been, it’s merely palliative. Access can’t temper exclusion if its legacy is not addressed. These students are demanding it be addressed. Their protests are the natural result of bearing such a legacy’s hostilities.

Hostilities like a noose hung on campus at Duke, and then the university administration denying it was a hate crime. A frat denying female students of color entry into a party. My last year at Princeton, at a panel on socioeconomic diversity on campus, a professor implied that black and Latino students, and student athletes were less intelligent, citing meritocratic admissions at other schools, where student populations are overwhelmingly white and Asian. My friend, a black kid, had him, a man who said the racial diversity “we have in this country” is “bad diversity”, as a precept instructor the next semester.

A day after Jonathan Butler ended his hunger strike and Mizzou President Tim Wolfe resigned, Butler spoke to a crowd with protest group #ConcernedStudent1950 behind him: “Please stop focusing on the fact of the Mizzou hunger strike itself. look at why did we have to get here in the first place, why the struggle, and why we had to fight the way that we did.” He presented his hunger strike not as the reckless act of a lone individual, but rather, as the culmination of the efforts of a broader movement. “After all the letters we’ve sent, all the in-person interactions. After all the forums we’ve attended. After all the tweets and DMs that we’ve sent telling the administration about our pain, it should not have taken this much.” He presented the history of denials.

This history is paralleled at Yale, where student protesters said in their demands: “Over the past week, people of color, especially women, outpoured painful experiences of blatant racism at Yale and organized their peers to demonstrate solidarity and resilience. They spent hours
meeting with President Salovey and Dean Holloway—as well as other administrators, faculty, and fellow students—in an attempt to ask for help in ensuring their safety and well-being on campus. President Salovey’s first response was to announce that Yale is now a tobacco-free campus.”

The absurdity lies in the contrast: The students’ confession of pain yielded a smoking ban. The students invested emotional labor, and a tremendous amount of time—these are still students, whose job it is to graduate—in an attempt at progress, only to be met with a non sequitur. They received no recognition of the emotional intensity of asking for more, through the quiet institutional path, and being denied.

After Darren Wilson was not indicted, some of my friends and I formed the Black Justice League, a group against campus racism, out of mourning, and out of a need for the mourning to end. One of our friends was researching the history of black-student protests for his thesis. He warned the group that the university would use bureaucracy to try dampen our protests. He warned us that committees and task forces would be formed. Meetings would be scheduled before breaks or early in the morning. They would wait for the seniors to graduate and pray that the summer would calm the rest down.

Most of his predictions proved prophetic. Princeton’s president Eisgruber himself seemed to confirm these warnings in an email sent out following the 32-hour sit-in at his office: “In December of last year, I charged a Special Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to develop recommendations that would enable our University to provide a more welcoming environment for students of all backgrounds.” And still, a year later, on a November night, students were asleep on stones and grass and in tents, blankets, and sleeping bags, outside of the oldest building on campus.

Operating through the institutions, through forums and task forces, has not been enough. Historically, institutions operate slowly, but also historically, these institutions were created by excluding certain population groups. How much is possible without recognition of past injustice?

What persists is implicit in #ConcernedStudent1950’s name. It was the year black students were admitted into Mizzou. But focusing on such milestones only reinforces the narrow, limiting notion of continual progress. Slavery ended in 1865. Yale produced a black graduate in 1874, and black students arrived at Mizzou in 1950. The black student protests took place in the 1960s. All these things that are named progress, with beginnings and their celebrated ends.

The third demand on the #ConcernedStudent1950 group’s list is: “We demand that the University of Missouri meets the Legion of Black Collegians’ demands that were presented in the 1969 for the betterment of the black community.” June Beshea, the president of the Real Silent Sam Coalition, a black activist group at the University of North Carolina, read out demands from 1968 at a recent demonstration. The demands render this connection explicit: “In 1968 the Black Student Movement issued 23 demands to the University. Almost 50 years have passed, but if you look at the demands you realize we are still dealing with exactly the same issues: little has changed.”
This terrifying dissonance between progress and what still exists is not unique to the campuses, it’s part of the American bloodline. It is a sentiment that stretches from slavery to mass incarceration, Black Lives Matter, and these campus protests. Imagine them on a string, all these manifestations with beginnings and ends; history and progress. The demand is for the recognition of the string itself. It’s an interrogation that perhaps only seems to benefit those demanding for it, perhaps that is why it remains undone. Why can the integration of black students be called progress, while today’s protests are called reckless? The demand for this recognition goes against the very pervasive sentiment it wants recognized.

Parul Sehgal highlighted this dissonance in her defense of the student protesters’ resilience, by quoting James Meredith, the first black student enrolled at the University of Mississippi: “Ole Miss kicked my butt, and they’re still celebrating,” he said in an interview with Esquire in 2012. “‘Because every black that’s gone there since me has been insulted, humiliated, and they can’t even tell their story. Everybody has to tell James Meredith’s story—which is a lie. The powers that be in Mississippi understand this very clearly.’” He continued, “‘They’re gonna keep on doin’ it because it makes it impossible for the blacks there now to say anything about what’s happened to them.’”

And if it is this impossible, I am not sure what is left but recklessness. Who demands their body back quietly?

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**Paying to Ignore Racism**

December 10, 2015

By Shaun R. Harper

Each year, college presidents, provosts, deans and other senior administrators hire researchers from the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, where I serve as executive director, to spend three to four days on their campuses conducting what feels like nonstop focus groups with students of color and their white peers about the realities of race on campuses. Sometimes campus leaders ask us to focus our climate studies on faculty and staff. We also collect statistical reports from offices of institutional research that typically show racial disparities in enrollment, academic performance, graduation rates, promotions and salaries, and a range of other metrics.
Over the past decade, center researchers and I have done this work at dozens of predominantly white institutions across the United States, including community colleges, small liberal arts college, large public research universities and Ivy League universities. When their top administrators call us, we presume it is because they seriously want to know more about how people from different racial and ethnic groups experience their institutions -- and that they are going to use our findings and recommendations to finally deal with longstanding racial problems on their campuses. I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that this assumption is at times erroneous.

For example, senior administrators at one university paid the center $25,000 to conduct a climate study two years ago. They didn’t like our findings. The person who commissioned the research wrote me an email in which she commented, “My colleagues and I think your findings are too harsh.”

My response was, “The findings are what they are.”

She replied by asking if I could somehow tone down what we found. I refused, as doing so would have been academically dishonest.

What she and her colleagues failed to realize is that several students cried uncontrollably in their interviews with us. As was the case at the University of Missouri and Yale University, black students, most especially, were tired of having white administrators ignore their concerns about the campus racial climate. They were frustrated that campus officials did nothing about the blackface party a predominantly white fraternity recently hosted. They were sick of being so underrepresented in their classes, having their white professors and peers so routinely stereotype them, finding so few courses taught by faculty of color, and encountering so little of their own racial histories and selves in the curriculum.

Yet these realities were too much for the administrators to handle. They were not ready to hear the truth. Hence, the report we furnished the institution was never publicly disseminated, as originally planned. Several students of color whom we interviewed contacted us months later asking where the report was because they never saw it.

The sad reality is that the administrators at this university paid us an enormous sum of money to remain in denial about its racial problems. This had happened to us before and has occurred again since.

In fact, students of color recently launched a protest that has garnered tremendous national news media attention at an institution where we did racial climate research this past spring. Campus leaders there did nothing with the report for which they paid my center $30,000. Perhaps they could have saved themselves from the public shame they are presently experiencing. We told them the truth and gave numerous recommendations for institutional change. They hired us to ultimately ignore us, a choice for which they are now paying a significantly higher price.

Eight years ago, prior to the launch of my center at Penn, the University of Missouri-Kansas City hired me to conduct a campus racial climate assessment. On the final day of my visit, I publicly presented my preliminary findings. The event was well publicized. People who had participated in focus groups over the three days of my study knew I would talk about what I heard across the interviews. Thus, almost all of them came to my presentation. One (or possibly more) of them alerted The Kansas City Star. Unbeknownst to me, a reporter was in my audience.

The next day, this headline appeared in the city’s major newspaper: “UMKC Gets Poor Racial Report Card.” Administrators here, unlike their counterparts at many other predominantly white institutions at
which I have done climate assessments over the past 10 years, acted swiftly and aggressively -- most likely in large part because their university was publicly shamed. Top administrators there had no choice but to act on my report’s recommendations.

I really want campus leaders to stop wasting their money and our time on climate studies they will never use. Nine of my center’s 11 staff members are people of color; most of our 22 faculty affiliates are professors of color from across academic schools and departments at Penn who study race and education. For us, this work is deeply personal. We don’t want to spend our time doing research for leaders who aren’t seriously committed to equity, campus climate change and institutional transformation. We never exaggerate our findings; we instead commit ourselves to truthful representations of insights that people generously offer to us about the realities of race on campuses.

Choosing to ignore these realities won’t make them less real. Eventually, colleges and universities will have to pay a much higher price for racism should their leaders choose to ignore our findings, no matter how harsh they seem.

Students of color will continually drop out in higher numbers (lost tuition dollars), faculty and staff members of color will keep leaving through a revolving door (higher turnover costs), and alumni of color will be considerably less likely to contribute financially to an institution they know to be racist (forfeited donations for institutional advancement). At the University of Missouri, unresponsiveness cost the system president and chancellor of the flagship campus their jobs. Indeed, maintaining an institution’s good reputation, authentically enacting diversity-related commitments espoused in mission statements and elsewhere, and leading with integrity is priceless.

BIO

Shaun R. Harper is founder and executive director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Harper is author of the forthcoming book Race Matters in College (Johns Hopkins University Press) and president-elect of the Association for the Study of Higher Education.

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.

‘This Case Shouldn’t Be Here Again’: Activists Outside the Supreme Court on ‘Fisher’ and Race

By Ellen Wexler DECEMBER 09, 2015

WASHINGTON

The National Action Network was one of several civil-rights groups that protested in front of the Supreme Court on Wednesday as the justices heard arguments in a case challenging the U. of Texas at Austin’s race-conscious admissions policy.

As the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on Wednesday in Abigail Noel Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, the latest in a long line of cases to challenge race-conscious college admissions, protesters gathered outside.

In front of the court’s steps, members of civil-rights groups stood around a podium, holding up signs that said "#Opportunity4ALL" and "#fishervut." On the other side of the sidewalk, counterprotesters chanted, "No more racial quotas!"

It was the second time Fisher had been heard here — in 2013 the court issued a limited ruling that did not broadly revisit affirmative-action policies — and the scene outside may have seemed familiar.

‘Fisher’ in Context: Making Sense of Today’s Oral Arguments

What will tomorrow’s college admissions look like? Campus experts weren’t certain after the Supreme Court’s first ruling in Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, in 2013. Nor are they certain now, as the court heard new oral arguments in the case on Wednesday.
But there's much to say about the future of race in admissions. A collection of Chronicle articles that puts Fisher in a broader campus context is available here.

But now the case returned to the court amid racial protests on campuses across the country. Outside the building, protesters — mostly civil-rights leaders, not students — occasionally cited events of the past year, on campus and off, arguing that the case could affect minority populations for decades to come.

"What happens here is related to what happened in Ferguson," said Dennis Parker, director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s Racial Justice Program. "It’s related to the University of Missouri, and it has to change."

"This case shouldn’t be here again," Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, told the crowd. "We should be expanding opportunity, not restricting it."

The protesters chanted and sang, but mostly they listened. Organized by the National Action Network, leaders of civil-rights groups started speaking an hour before the court session began, and continued for more than two hours.

While the speakers took note of recent campus activism, it wasn’t a driving force in their speeches. Most often, they mentioned it in the context of other civil-rights symbols: Ferguson, Mo.; Brown v. Board of Education; Rosa Parks.

Colleges across the country are gripped with questions of racial inclusivity, as students demand more recognition, more support, and more change. Their demands and protests draw attention to continuing racial disparities in higher education, where African-Americans make up a small portion of professors, presidents, and selective-college enrollments. A collection of recent news and commentary from The Chronicle, designed to be printed and shared, can provide a starting point for discussion of what might be done to improve the climate and conditions on your own campus. Download the free booklet here.

In interviews, many protesters said a lack of broad access to higher education helps drive the racial tensions on campuses. Without a large presence at colleges and universities, they said, minority students feel unwelcome.

"If you look at the demands of the protesters across the country, you see a consistent pattern of complaints about racial isolation, campuses not being a place that celebrates inclusion, and a lot of this relates to access," said Marcus Bright, executive director of Education for a Better America, a group that promotes education in urban communities. "What the protesters have uncovered is an institutionalized pattern of a lack of access and diversity on campuses across the country."

Brenda Calderon, an education-policy analyst, came to the event to show her support for the National Council of La Raza, whose president was among the speakers. Ms. Calderon said the nationwide campus protests had helped show that issues of access and inclusion are still relevant.

"Students are demonstrating because they stand to benefit from racial diversity," she said. "Students are protesting because they’re not feeling welcome."

‘Treat All Races the Same’
Across the sidewalk, members of the Asian-American Coalition for Education gathered to protest affirmative action. They held up signs that said, "Treat All Races the Same" and "Support Fair College Admission." Before the oral arguments began, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, Republican of California, spoke to the group briefly.

"Trying to help some people, there have been unintended consequences by violating the rights of other people," Mr. Rohrabacher said. "Asian-Americans end up being hurt. Their children are denied — because of their race — entry into our universities."

Across the sidewalk were counterprotesters from the Asian-American Coalition for Education, who called for the Supreme Court to strike down the U. of Texas policy.

The coalition, founded in 2014, argues that affirmative-action policies discriminate against Asian students. In September it filed a brief with the Supreme Court arguing that race should not be considered in college admissions. Its members were some of the only protesters outside the court on Wednesday to oppose affirmative action.

When the court session ended and audience members started walking outside, the Rev. Al Sharpton, president of the National Action Network, who had watched the arguments inside the courthouse, addressed the protesters.

"The fact that you're here is important," he told the thinning crowd. "Where is everybody else?"

He said he was troubled by a comment made by Justice Antonin Scalia in court. Justice Scalia had suggested that some black students would be better served by "less-advanced" colleges. "I didn’t know if I was in the Supreme Court or in a Donald Trump rally," Mr. Sharpton said.

Christle Nwora, a senior at the University of Texas, traveled to Washington to witness the arguments. She watched from inside, and spoke in an interview after the court adjourned.

"Race is still a very important consideration," she said. "On our college campuses, this is a very dominant narrative."

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**Editorial: Retailers encouraged to make healthy food be more than a mirage**

Dec. 9, 2015 • By the Editorial Board

Many of America’s poorest neighborhoods — including more than a dozen in St. Louis — still lack a reliable source of fresh, nutritional food, despite a pledge more than five years ago by major retailers to begin stocking shelves in the nation’s “food deserts.”

Michelle Obama’s campaign to increase food accessibility has made some progress since the early days of her husband’s administration. But a recent Associated Press analysis shows little of that help came from grocery chains, including retailers who made a high-profile commitment to open or expand 1,500 stores in...
underserved, low-income neighborhoods by mid-2016.

Only 602 of those stores had been built by last year, according to a progress report by the Partnership for a Healthier America, the group founded by Mrs. Obama to address the nation’s obesity and nutrition problems.

The AP’s analysis of the situation is even grimmer — the nation’s top 75 retailers opened 2,434 grocery stores between 2010 and the first quarter of 2015, but only 250 were in areas classified as a food desert. That designation is assigned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to low-income urban neighborhoods where a supermarket is a mile or more away and to low-income rural areas where the nearest major grocery is at least 10 miles away.

Many people in low-income neighborhoods don’t have cars and either walk or rely on public transportation, friends and family to transport them. That can be expensive and must be factored into the food bill. Schlepping groceries more than a mile on foot will dictate what a person buys, so gone are the fresh fruit and vegetables that are difficult to carry home in a sack.

Because so much of the new supermarket construction was not focused in food deserts, those stores are serving only 1.4 million of the more than 18 million Americans who lack reasonable access to healthy groceries, according to the AP’s research.

Residents of St. Louis know the story all too well. Last year, Schnucks closed a supermarket in the Jeff-Vander-Lou neighborhood in north St. Louis. The area is one of 15 food deserts in the city.

Schnucks is far from the worst offender, though. Despite that departure, the company maintains a presence in other low-income neighborhoods, unlike some of its competitors.

Opening a store in a food desert — and keeping it open — is no easy task. According to the Food Marketing Institute, the average supermarket operates on a 1 percent to 2 percent profit margin, making it unappealing for many chains to invest in struggling areas.

Jeff Brown, CEO of Brown’s Super Stores in Philadelphia, told the AP that retailers need to rethink their approach and include other amenities that low-income neighborhoods lack, such as pharmacies, medical clinics and banks.

Aldi, a German chain building new stores in Missouri, seems to have found a successful formula by focusing on smaller stores and a no-frills approach, including in St. Louis. The retail giant Walmart has had luck with smaller neighborhood stores, too, and is one of the few retailers to meet the goals it set with Mrs. Obama five years ago.

As she points out, limited access to healthy food contributes to chronic medical problems, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes. When more choices are available — and shoppers are better informed about how their choices affect their health — medical costs are lowered for individuals and, in turn, the nation.

Despite the lackluster support from major retailers, there are other signs of progress. Community-based groups in St. Louis and elsewhere have been successful in convincing smaller, corner stores to expand their offerings of fresh fruit and vegetables. St. Louis has 349 corner stores that accept food stamps, according to the city’s Department of Health. Organizers say the project has boosted the amount of healthy food inventory by 24 percent. The effort — a joint venture of the University of Missouri Extension and state Department of Health — is called Stock Healthy, Shop Healthy.

Other unlikely sources are helping. According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, 77 percent of the nation’s quick marts now sell some fresh food. Packaged salads and other offerings are available at many Wawa, Walgreens and CVS stores, among others.
Farmers markets and community gardens also have a critical role to play in expanding access to fresh food in low-income neighborhoods. So might nontraditional and creative initiatives like St. Louis MetroMarket, a nonprofit transforming a retired city bus into a mobile grocery store to serve food deserts. Similar programs have proven successful in other urban areas.

Mrs. Obama and the Obama administration don’t appear likely to meet their ambitious goal of eliminating food deserts by the end of next year. But the progress so far — as incremental as it has been — is encouraging, and the next occupants of the White House should continue to emphasize the link between good eating habits, good health and lower medical costs. In the meantime, America’s major retailers need to continue to work on fulfilling the pledges they made to help their nation achieve those goals.

This editorial was commissioned from freelance editorialists and edited by the Post-Dispatch editorial board

Mizzou creates central office for reports of discrimination

By Mariah Stewart, Ferguson Fellow

Students at the University of Missouri-Columbia now have one office designated to receive and investigate all reports of discrimination. On Wednesday, December 3 the university’s Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Garnett Stokes announced the creation of the Office for Civil Rights & Title IX.

Previously, the university had a Title IX office that only dealt with Title IX complaints. Title IX is a federal law passed in 1972 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in federally funded education entities. Civil rights complaints were handled previously by Human Resources, the Equity Office and the Office of Student Conduct.

According to the university’s press release, “the new office will create a centralized tool for reporting all forms of discrimination.”

MU Title IX administrator Ellen Eardley will lead the expanded office, which will report incidents directly to Stokes “with a dotted line report to Interim Chancellor Henry Foley,” according to the press release.

“We are committed to creating an inclusive campus climate that celebrates diversity and is built upon respect for others,” Stokes said.
The office will handle reports and investigations regarding color, race, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, genetic information, disability or veteran status, according to the release.

Eardley told the *Columbian Missourian* that the office will follow the Equity Resolution Process to make victims feel more comfortable, including allowing confidentiality or privacy if requested. Investigators will also address concerns about safety in the workplace and school and provide support for victims.

The launch of the new office comes after student activists demonstrated and demanded structural change in the university’s standards.

The students’ demands drew national attention after graduate student Jonathan Butler committed to a hunger-strike until university President Tim Wolfe resigned. After gaining solidarity with Mizzou’s football team, which threatened to strike on game day, Butler’s strike was successful and Wolfe resigned.

Black Mizzou students told the Huffington Post, they regularly feel racial bias on campus. Following Wolfe’s resignation, a series of racist threats were directed at black students. Students of color were encouraged to not go out on campus alone, and many fled campus temporarily. Classes were cancelled for a week. One student, who wished to remain anonymous for safety, told *The American* she was followed and called racial slurs by three white males.

Prior to the announcement of the new office, a local NAACP chapter created a confidential telephone hotline for students to report acts of discrimination. Columbia students can report incidents to 844-NAACP-HELP.

Last month, Nimrod Chapel, president of the Jefferson City NAACP, told the HuffPost the Mizzou student activists’ stance against inequality is “commendable.”

“The students and concerned members of the University of Missouri have given us all a wake-up call,” Chapel told HuffPost.

A conversation with Yvonne Sparks

New Board of Curators member has a strong passion for inclusivity and sees value in all people and beliefs
Yvonne Sparks remembers growing up in the cabin her great-grandfather built in Troy, Missouri. She remembers shucking corn and shelling peas, making jelly and fetching spring water. She’ll never forget sitting on the porch swing with her grandmother or the winding route the black students’ school bus took, where she developed a love for nature through the bus windows.

Sparks would never relinquish any of these memories. But she would trade the memories of not being able to go through the front door of the café in town or being called names every day as she walked to the black bus at the end of the school’s driveway.

In high school, Sparks was the only girl of four black students in her class of 160. She graduated as valedictorian and student council president. She has a bachelor’s degree in administration of justice from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, two master’s degrees from St. Louis University and Webster University and a Harvard certificate in public policy. She served the city of St. Louis on various boards as a nonprofit executive, community development banker and public engagement consultant. She is currently the vice president and community development officer for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

Sparks was appointed to the UM System Board of Curators on Nov. 13 by Gov. Jay Nixon. She will serve a six-year term, pending confirmation by the Missouri Senate. Of nine curators, she will be the second black curator and one of two women currently on the board.

“The biggest thing I learned from working with Yvonne is to listen deeply,” says Orvin Kimbrough, a former student and colleague of Sparks’ at the Vashon/JeffVanderLou Initiative, an organization devoted to improving the quality of life in St. Louis neighborhoods. “We started off working in a very challenged community, and she always listened to the residents.” Kimbrough says Sparks will bring dynamism, cultural knowledge and optimism with her to the board.

How do you think your experiences have prepared you for this role as a curator?
That I have both a rural and urban background, that I’ve transcended worlds. I’ve always lived on the cusp of movements: the women’s movement, the black movement, the environmental movement. All of these things have been part of my life’s experience. But then, I feel that I’ve always done public service. I ran nonprofits for the majority of my career, so it feels natural. This is an opportunity to give something back and to use my life experiences, my education and my great love for working with students.

What is the role of the Board of Curators?
Beyond ensuring that the quality of instruction and classwork are top notch, a university has to be a place that socializes people, some of whom are away from home for the first time. They’re exposed to diversity on all levels, not just ethnic and racial, but diversity of thought. As a
Why did you choose to accept this position?
I didn’t ask for it, but the opportunity came to me. And given what’s happening on UM campuses and campuses all over the United States, I felt that if this came to me, there must be something I have to offer. If this came to me, I need to step up because I believe that if you’re called upon to do public service based on who you are and not your connection, you either step up or you step off. And I chose to step up because I believe there’s important work to do.

How did you first respond to the events that happened on campus this fall?
I wasn’t surprised. It has happened over and over again. I know how it feels, and I know it’s not overblown because it keeps happening. The same thing that was asked in 1969 is still being asked today. There are many issues to be dealt with, and they’re legitimate. People were participating in the civic life of the campus community, and there has to be a response. Some things require a response that is institutionalized; some require the tweaking of programs, maybe big changes, little changes, but people need to feel they’re being responded to, no matter what their issue.

What advice do you have for the students, staff and faculty at MU?
To act like a community. To value everyone. To understand that when you leave that campus, you’re going into a world that is diverse in thought, in opportunity. Living in this microcosm of a community is where you can practice that and embrace it and be prepared for the world because after all, that’s what you’re there for.

Northwest Medical Isotopes project moves forward

By Alicia Stice

Wednesday, December 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

In a meeting more than a year in the making, one of Columbia’s biggest business recruitment efforts in recent memory took a step forward Tuesday night.
A public meeting held by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission marked the early stages of the process that Oregon-based Northwest Medical Isotopes LLC must undergo to build a $50-million radioisotope production facility at the University of Missouri’s Discovery Ridge Research Park in southeast Columbia. The company has said the plant could create 68 high-paying jobs. The production facility also will make Columbia home to one of the few domestic manufacturers of an isotope widely used in medical imaging tests.

“Because you are more familiar with your community than we are, your comments tonight will help us throughout the NRC staff review,” Environmental Project Manager Nancy Martinez told meeting attendees Tuesday. The public comment period is open until Jan. 4.

When determining whether to issue the permit, the commission will look at how the facility might affect fish and wildlife, human health, and water and air quality, among other things.

Northwest Medical Isotopes plans to produce molybdenum-99, an isotope needed by radiopharmacies for the production of technetium-99m. Technetium is widely used for medical diagnostic tests for cancer as well as heart, bone and kidney diseases.

The production of molybdenum-99 domestically could help reduce issues sometimes involved with transporting the material to the United States from foreign countries.

The company plans to collaborate with the MU Research Reactor, a 10-megawatt research facility located southwest of Stadium Boulevard and Providence Road, if its Columbia plant is approved.

Tuesday’s meeting was part of the “environmental scoping” process, which involves the NRC gathering comments and concerns from the community about the potential environmental impact of the proposed plant. The commission also will review the more technical aspects of the plant related to safety before it holds a final hearing and determines whether to issue the permit.

Congress created the NRC in the mid-1970s as a way to monitor the use of radioactive materials for “beneficial civilian purposes.” It regulates commercial nuclear power plants and other uses of nuclear materials, such as for nuclear medicine. Viktoria Mitlyng, spokeswoman for the commission’s Region 3, said the permitting process usually takes 18 to 24 months, depending on the quality of the application.

Several local officials, including Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid, Boone County Southern District Commissioner Karen Miller and Regional Economic Development Inc. board member Dave Griggs, spoke in support of the project. Representatives with the Missouri Department of Economic Development and the Columbia Chamber of Commerce also spoke in support of the proposed plant. No one publicly voiced opposition to the project at the meeting.

McDavid touted the jobs that could be created by the facility as well as its importance to the medical community.
“It is important to the economy here in Mid-Missouri,” he said before referencing his career as a physician. “I know how important this tool is, and I know there are a lot of health care providers who are uncomfortable with the prospect that technetium might be in short supply in the near future.”

Mizzou group celebrates Hanukkah in a different way

Watch story: [http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31857&zone=2,5&categories=2,5](http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31857&zone=2,5&categories=2,5)

COLUMBIA – **One group of University of Missouri students is celebrating Hanukkah in a rather different way this holiday season.**

The Chabad at Mizzou built a four-foot Menorah made out of canned foods in the middle of the MU Student Center.

Four candles were lit, and each night one more will be lit until the holiday is over.

After the holiday is over, the cans will be donated to the Food Bank of Central Missouri.

Rabbi Avraham Lapine said the holiday and event show how light can be brought to the world.

“That’s just showing the message how it doesn’t take much to really make a difference in this world,” Lapine said. “All it takes is just a small can can change a life and brighten someone’s day.”

Lapine said the idea is that people don’t fight evil with evil, but fight darkness with love and light.

Evan Wiel, a sophomore at the University of Missouri says having this event in the middle of the MU Student Center is very beneficial.
“Hanukkah means being with my family and in this case being with my friends and getting to express my Judaism, here it is in public so it’s a little bit nicer to let other people see what Judaism is and getting them to understand.”

The event was accompanied by a variety of songs played and prayers led by Rabbi Lapine.

A 'New Deal' for Athletes

December 10, 2015
By John Gerdy

NO MU MENTION

In 1997, I published a book titled The Successful College Athletic Program: The New Standard, in which I wrote about “the deal” between the “student-athlete and the institution.” Specifically, I argued that the agreement in which student-athletes provide athletic performance in exchange for the opportunity to earn a well-balanced athletic, academic and social experience resulting in a meaningful degree that prepares them for the next 50 years of their lives was, in principle, fair. As a former college basketball player and former associate commissioner of the Southeastern Conference, I saw enough evidence of this in the players I interacted with that I truly believed it.

Given how much the landscape of intercollegiate athletics has changed since 1997, though, The New Standard might as well have been published in 1887.

Everything about big-time college athletics has exploded -- from budgets to revenue generated, from media exposure to public scrutiny and, in a corresponding fashion, the pressure to win and the 24/7, 12-months-a-year athletic demands on players. The result? There is no longer any question that the education athletes are receiving as their share of the bargain at far too many universities has been woefully inadequate, and in some cases fraudulent. Clearly, it is time to restructure the athlete-institution agreement in a way that reflects the realities of major college athletics in the 21st century.

Before proceeding, we must recognize a fundamental reality. There is no longer any point in referring to the young people who play football and men’s basketball at the major college level as “student-athletes.” Given the amount of time they are required to spend on athletics, for all practicality, they are, in fact, professionals. Further, their ability to keep their scholarships (pay) hinges upon their ability to
perform athletically (play). And a professional athlete is one who plays for pay. So let’s move beyond the notion that they are amateurs and can ever be so again. That is pure fantasy.

So how can the deal be restructured to be equitable in the wildly commercialized, highly professionalized, media-driven world of college athletics in the 21st century?

Let’s start with the basics, the benefits provided and costs covered for the athlete while on campus. Fortunately, many of these basic, on-campus needs are beginning to be met with proposals for increased cost of attendance and living stipends and the possibility of multiyear scholarship guarantees that have been granted through recent NCAA changes. That’s a good start.

But let’s not simply give athletes things while on campus to keep them and the public placated in the short term. We must also recalibrate our priorities to where long-term considerations become paramount. That will require a more creative, open-minded and strategic approach.

The New Deal

There are two fundamental principles and responsibilities that colleges and universities owe to all students, including athletes: an educational experience that is relevant in today’s world and a commitment to keeping them safe and healthy.

As has been well documented, the health risks of football are skyrocketing, driven by the increasing revelations relating to the risk of concussion and long-term brain trauma. We’re no longer talking about sprained ankles and broken bones. They can heal. Brains often do not.

As a result, the ground has shifted regarding institutional responsibility for not only athletes’ short-term health while on campus but also their long-term physical well-being. While there are many issues to be worked out regarding eligibility, length of coverage and adjudication of benefits and costs, some package of long-term health care after separation from the institution should be a part of the New Deal.

Further, it is abundantly clear that the standard college educational experience is not available for football and men’s basketball athletes. Yet we insist on forcing many who are clearly nontraditional students into a traditional educational format. Clearly, that approach has not worked. Simply consider the University of North Carolina’s decades-long use of bogus classes and majors to keep athletes eligible as exhibit A. And that was a school that had long been cited as one that did it the “right” way. Obviously, UNC is not the only college to engage in this practice, as evidenced in recent academic fraud cases at Syracuse and the University of Texas. The fact is, academic fraud and disregarding the long-term needs and aspirations of athletes in the name of winning has been going on, in one form or another, for decades, if not for a century.

We simply can’t continue to enter into agreements with young athletes based on a promise on which we can’t deliver. We must restructure the academic portion of their college experience in a way that will make the education they do receive worthy of, and relevant in, the 21st century.

As a foundation, there must be an opportunity and mechanism for athletes to return to school after their playing days are over. For example, for every year that an athlete plays for a university, he should be awarded an additional one-year full scholarship to attend the institution at a later date to more fully avail himself of the broad array of not only educational, but social, opportunities and experiences that were not truly available when playing ball. Regardless of how the specifics are worked out, the New Deal should include such a provision.
The On-Campus Payout

There is another aspect to the educational payout that must be addressed. What should the educational experience look like while on campus?

It starts with the sacred notion of the athlete as a full-time student. The college experience of these athletes is so radically different from that of the average, traditional student that they might as well be attending college on another planet. Why continue the farce of these athletes having to be traditional full-time students when the fundamental structure of the system prevents them from being so?

For example, during their main playing seasons, athletes should be part-time students. During the off-season, they should be required to be enrolled in more hours. But, once again, we must be honest. Being a major college athlete in the sports of football and basketball is a 24-7, year-round job. What they really need is a legitimate off-season. It was never intended that part of the deal was that we “own” them twelve months a year. They are not machines. Athletes need a period of time where they have no responsibilities or requirements related to the sport for at least three months per year. Even professional teams give their athletes time off.

Further, many expect that as a result of several legal cases currently in the system, athletes will be provided the right to leverage their own pictures and images for financial gain while enrolled in college. Rather than fighting these changes, educational and athletic leaders should embrace it as an opportunity to restructure the deal in new and creative ways that are more relevant for the athlete of the 21st century.

For example, giving athletes the opportunity to leverage their name and build their personal brand offers a wonderful experiential educational opportunity to restructure the bargain in a way that makes sense for today’s world.

Why not, for example, provide athletes the option of a restructured curriculum to not only allow them to leverage their name and brand but to provide opportunities to teach lessons in business and entrepreneurship? Let’s put a curriculum in place where, through a true, real-life case study -- their very own -- they learn the skills of innovation, branding and entrepreneurship.

Athletes will be much more engaged as students if their curriculum centers on using their name and image to build a personal brand or a small business that could result in their own financial gain. Such a curriculum could include studies in marketing, social media, brand equity, revenue development, financial investing, sales, leadership and mentoring development, sport management, coaching, and sport law. These courses are far more likely to be viewed as being more relevant by today’s athletes than those that comprise the more traditional curriculum.

Although some may consider such a change simply kowtowing to athletes, the point is that we must reconsider what a meaningful educational experience for athletes in today’s world consists of, as it is clear that the current framework is outdated.

While there may have been a time when athletes could achieve a well-balanced athletic and traditional academic experience, that possibility, for big-time football and men’s basketball athletes, no longer exists. While the athletic side of the enterprise has evolved exponentially, the expectations and standards relating to the academic side of the deal have remained virtually unchanged. We simply cannot continue to run a 21st-century athletics enterprise with a 20th-century mind-set and worldview.
So the question for higher education leaders is whether they are going to be progressive agents of change or victims of what will likely be draconian change. The choice for American higher education is to either sort this out among ourselves or leave it to those outside higher education to impose their version of change upon us.

In short, it’s time for a New Deal. This agreement should be comprised of a restructured academic experience that honors our responsibility to provide a real-world, honest and relevant educational experience but also reflects the realities of today’s athlete.

BIO

John Gerdy, former associate commissioner of the Southeastern Conference, is founder and executive director of Music for Everyone and author of Ball or Bands: Football vs. Music as an Educational and Community Investment.