COLUMBIA – Early reports indicate a downward trend in applications to enroll at MU for the fall semester.

The decline in numbers was attributed, at least in part, to the recent campus protests centered on race.

"While we don’t have any clear data, we know that the events this past fall have had an impact, and we are answering any questions that parents and students have about those events," Director of Admissions Chuck May wrote in an email.

Applications to study at MU through December decreased by 941 compared to the same time in 2014, according to a report dated Monday from the MU Office of Enrollment.

The total of 18,377 applications represents a 4.87 percent decline compared to the previous year, according to the report.

Graduate applications have decreased by 354 applications from last year, a 19 percent decline, the report reads.

The report attributed much of the decline to out-of-state residents, half of whom lived in Illinois. Non-residents made up 51 percent of the total. Residential applications have decreased by 9.8 percent since last year.

"It is very early in the year to make predictions on application numbers," May said. "We’ve anticipated a decline in numbers due to decreases in the number of high school graduates throughout the Midwest and increased competition, especially in the Chicago market."
Other factors are increased competition for new students, especially in the Chicago area; declining numbers of high school students in MU’s "top feeder states" due to lower birth rates 18 years ago and migration to southern states, May said.

May hopes that bringing current MU students to talk at recruiting events about their experiences will help increase applications.

"We are working closely with many on campus to make every effort possible in the coming months to minimize that decrease," the report reads.

MU officials are working with schools and colleges to call admitted students directly to see what questions they might have about attending MU, May said. Also, faculty representatives from different MU schools and colleges will be attending more recruiting events.

The number of deposits has declined by 383, or 16 percent, compared to a year ago, the report reads. More deposits were expected once students receive information about orientation and residential life.

Thirty percent of the decrease in deposits comes from "students of color," the report reads.

The report also highlights the estimated 3 percent decrease in applications from African-Americans. MU has seen an upward trend in black applicants in recent years, showing close to a 6 percent increase since 2012.

African-Americans make up 12.49 percent of the applicants that have been recorded so far for fall 2016, according to the report.

Mizzou Panel Calls for Better Pay for Grad Students
A University of Missouri at Columbia task force is recommending better pay for graduate assistants, increased access to housing and child care for graduate students, and more shared governance, along with other improvements, the Columbia Daily Tribune reported. The news follows months of turmoil on campus over climate concerns and the news in August that the university was eliminating health insurance subsidies for graduate students because they did not comply with the Affordable Care Act. The health care changes were soon suspended, and a task force on graduate students' concerns picked up the issue.

The task force, formed by Leona Rubin, associate vice chancellor for graduate studies at the request of Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin (who has since resigned), looked at three things: quality-of-life issues for graduate students, nonacademic resources and academic experiences. Its newly issued report recommends the university increase minimum stipends for graduate students with 20-hour appointments to $18,000 annually by 2020, whereas some students currently make as little as $14,000, according to the Tribune.

Missouri task force recommends higher graduate student pay

COLUMBIA, Mo. • A task force at the University of Missouri is recommending improvements for graduate students, including higher pay.

The task force’s recommendations include raising graduate student stipends and improving their access to housing and childcare, the Columbia Daily Tribune reported. Graduate students have been asking for the changes throughout the school year.

University administrators told graduate assistants in August that health insurance subsidies would no longer be offered because of an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act. The university went back on that plan after getting backlash.

Graduate students formed a group unaffiliated with the university. The group gave a list of demands to administrators and advocated for better benefits.

Eric Scott, a doctoral student studying English at the university, called the task force’s recommendations a “huge vindication” for students’ demands.

“We have a university task force that is essentially agreeing with all of the demands we have been making all along,” said Scott, who has helped lead a committee within the student-formed group.
The task force was formed by the university last spring and was charged to look into long-term options. It said in its report that its work was affected by the decision on insurance subsidies, the university’s changing of its graduate student tuition waiver policy, and “the turmoil relating to race relations” and university leadership changes in the fall.

Those three incidents, the report said, caused the task force to either reconsider its “current direction” or “change the nature of our work.”

The report from the task force recommends that the minimum stipend for doctoral students be increased to $18,000 for 20-hour appointments by 2020, and that master’s students should get a proportional increase. Graduate assistants get a stipend in exchange for their research and teaching for the university.

Scott said he was “pleasantly surprised” by the stipend increase proposed by the task force.

“I personally make about $14,000 a year, so that feels like a substantial jump to me,” Scott said.

Horrigan: Click bait. Protecting not just stupid speech, but heinously nasty speech, too

January 09, 2016 8:00 am • By Kevin Horrigan

The plan today was to rise to the defense of Melissa Click, the assistant professor at the University of Missouri whom more than 100 Republican state lawmakers want fired.

The premise was going to be that if 100 Missouri state lawmakers, of whatever party, want you fired, you must be doing something right. Also, academic freedom — the right to profess unpopular views — is fundamental on university campuses. Colleges and universities are where ideas get tested. It’s where young people are supposed to be exposed to all sorts of ideas and learn to sort them out for themselves.

Then I read about James F. Tracy, who was fired last week from his job at Florida Atlantic University. Suddenly it seemed that in some places and in some instances, academic freedom should not be absolute. The trick is going to be deciding when and where.

The much-traveled, often-fired broadcaster Keith Olbermann used to do a shtick on MSNBC called “The Worst Person in the World.” James F. Tracy would be a lock.

The New York Times reports that Tracy, 50, “has repeatedly called into question the authenticity of recent mass shootings, including the slaying of churchgoers in Charleston, S.C., and office workers in San
Bernardino, Calif. In his blog postings and radio interviews, Mr. Tracy has said the Newtown massacre may have been carried out by ‘crisis actors’ employed by the Obama administration.”

This was not the immediate cause of his firing. You can be that stupid and still hold a job at Florida Atlantic. You can even harass the parents of Noah Pozner, a 6-year-old child who was among the 20 small children and six adults shot to death at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., in December 2012.

On Dec. 10, the third anniversary of the massacre, Lenny and Veronique Pozner published an opinion piece in the Florida Sun-Sentinel saying that “Tracy even sent us a certified letter demanding proof that Noah once lived, that we were his parents, and that we were the rightful owner of his photographic image.”

What a guy. Tracy has carried on a social media and classroom campaign asserting that the Newtown massacre was merely a “drill” staged by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Because he has tenure, lifetime job protection, Florida Atlantic couldn’t fire him for spreading inflammatory ideas or harassing grieving parents or being a total jerk. The reason the university cited was Tracy’s failure to file paperwork about his outside activities.

The question becomes how far down the Voltaire road you want to go. The 18th century Enlightenment philosopher is generally credited, if wrongly, with the adage, “I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

The Enlightenment scholars who wrote the U.S. Constitution thought so much of this sentiment that they enshrined it in the First Amendment. Generally, outside of crying “fire” in a crowded theater, or hate speech, or fighting words or obscenity or slander or libel, Americans can say pretty much whatever they want.

Even if journalists don’t like it, or Republican lawmakers, either.

Take Melissa Click. Back in November, she was captured on a video that became a YouTube sensation. She was taking part in a campus protest against racism at Mizzou, trying to keep reporters and photographers out of a “safe space” where students had camped.

The irony was that Click, who teaches in the communications department, also held a courtesy appointment to teach at Mizzou’s famous School of Journalism. That’s no longer the case.

She’s seen in the video calling for “muscle” to eject a photographer, who tells her “this is public property.” She puts a hand over his camera’s lens and tells him, “That’s a really good one. I’m a communications faculty and I really get that argument, but you need to go. You need to go, you need to go.”

Now, even though she has apologized for her actions, 100 or so Republican lawmakers think she needs to go. In a letter to the university’s Board of Curators, the lawmakers rise to the defense of free speech and reporters’ rights to cover the news.
The letter was dated Monday. Four days later, the Senate voted to move the press table from its traditional spot on the Senate floor. Apparently someone violated the senators’ own “safe space” by reporting a private conversation in what is actually a public space.

Legislators, before their four-day experiment as guardians of the Fourth Estate, regularly tried to thwart reporters from covering the news. They hold committee meetings in restaurants where lobbyists pick up the tab. They fudge the source of campaign contributions. They dodge open records requests.

If lawmakers really want to protect the public’s right to know, they would put some teeth in the state’s Sunshine Law. Call it the “Melissa Click Open Records and Meetings Bill.” Otherwise they’re just grandstanding, and should be ignored.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Week

A Fresh Start — or Not

As January begins, many students and professors are rushing back to campus after holiday break. For some it will be a fresh start to a new year, a welcome return to normalcy after copious fruitcake and festivities.

For others, not so much.

Case in point: the University of Missouri at Columbia. For the challenged institution, 2016 began with state lawmakers and faculty members feuding over the fate of an assistant professor.

More than 100 lawmakers are pushing the university to fire the professor, Melissa A. Click, for trying to force journalists from a demonstration about the racial climate at the college. In letters sent to university officials last month, 99 state representatives and 18 senators, all Republicans, called for her dismissal. The senators also demanded the ouster of Janna Basler, assistant director of Greek life.
Both women were caught on video in November confronting student journalists at a campus encampment organized by a black student group, which had asked reporters to stay away. On the video, Ms. Click can be heard shouting, "Hey, who wants to help me get this reporter out of here?" and "I need some muscle over here." Both Ms. Click and Ms. Basler apologized for their behavior, and Ms. Click resigned a courtesy appointment in the School of Journalism. She kept her position in the department of communication.

"As an academic professional, her first goal should have been to promote a safe and stable learning environment for all students, and to represent the university to the public in a way that strengthens the image of our flagship state institution of higher education," one letter from the Missouri legislators states. "Instead, Professor Click’s comments served to inflame an already caustic situation that was clearly out of line."

The letter also raises questions about Ms. Click’s research. It says constituents of the lawmakers "expressed outrage" that she had received taxpayer dollars to research 50 Shades of Grey, Lady Gaga, and the Twilight series.

In response, more than 115 faculty members made public a letter they had signed in defense of their colleague.

"We wish to state in no uncertain terms our support for Click as a member of the University of Missouri faculty who has earned her position through an outstanding record of teaching and research," says the letter, which was sent last month to university administrators. The faculty members wrote that "her actions on November 9 constitute at most a regrettable mistake."

University administrators have declined to comment on the matter, saying they won’t discuss personnel issues.
Needless to say, the future of Ms. Click’s job is far from resolved, and it seems poised to become more of a political fight, not less, in the months ahead.

Theological Dispute

Religion and tenure, it seems, have a challenging relationship.

Over time, the statements of faith that some Christian colleges require their faculty members to sign as a condition of employment have run up against academic freedom, the core principle that tenure is meant to protect.

The latest dispute involves Wheaton College in Illinois, which said last week it was moving to fire Larycia A. Hawkins, an associate professor of political science, in part because of concerns that her recent statements conflict with the college’s tenets.

In December the tenured professor wrote on Facebook that she would wear a hijab during the Advent season in support of Muslims, saying that Muslims and Christians "worship the same God." The nondenominational, evangelical institution raised concerns about her remarks, saying that there are "fundamental differences" between the two faiths, and put her on paid leave. In a statement released last week, the college said that after some initial discussions with the tenured professor, she had "declined to participate in further dialogue about the theological implications of her public statements."

Ms. Hawkins disputes that version of events. Appearing at a news conference last week surrounded by leaders of various faiths as well as a few Wheaton students, she said she felt "flummoxed and flabbergasted" by the college’s decision.

As requested by the college, she said, she had submitted to Stanton L. Jones, Wheaton’s provost, a four-page explanation of her theological views, which reaffirms the college’s
statement of faith. When the provost asked for further clarification, she said, it felt like "the goalposts keep moving," and she declined to answer more questions.

Next month she will have a hearing before a committee of nine faculty members, who will make a recommendation to the president and the Board of Trustees. The board will make the final decision.

Asked if she thinks she’ll get a fair hearing, Ms. Hawkins responded: "I believe from my faculty colleagues I will receive a fair shake, in part because their fate is bound up in my fate." (Read more here.)

And Now This

The University of Texas at Austin earned $1.8 million during its first season selling alcohol at Longhorn football games, reports The Houston Chronicle, which offered a detailed breakdown of what fans consumed. Miller Lite was the most popular purchase, generating more than $490,000. Sales of Lone Star, a Texas staple, accounted for only $13,426. … James F. Tracy, a communications professor who drew national attention by saying the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting had been staged, was fired last week by Florida Atlantic University. The college did not say publicly what had prompted its decision, but a notice of termination obtained by The Huffington Post said he had failed to submit paperwork of "professional activity" required of faculty members and had been repeatedly "insubordinate." … A university in Ontario has removed a professor from teaching a psychology class after he asked students to sign a "Statement of Understanding" that includes a list of potentially offensive words he may use, including several terms for both male and female genitalia. Laurentian University says the decision wasn’t about the words themselves but about the fact that the faculty member, Michael Persinger, had asked students to sign a document as a condition of taking the class. Mr. Persinger, who is a neuroscientist, says that he has presented the
statement to students for years and that any profanity he may use in the classroom is meant to be a teaching tool to show how the brain reacts to emotional language.

**Pen > Gun**

With 2015 marked by mass shootings at campuses in the United States and elsewhere in the world, Kenya offers a case study in resilience.

Garissa University College reopened last week, nine months after an attack by the militant Islamist group al-Shabab killed 148 people, many of them students. Dormitories have been refurbished, bullet-scarred walls have been repaired, and many faculty and staff members have returned.

The reopening, however, is somewhat symbolic; only a small portion of the college’s seats will be filled, with about 60 students expected to resume classes on the campus, in northeastern Kenya. Even so, locals hailed the event as a triumph over fear. "Just by opening the university we have won the war against al-Shabab," Khadija Mohamed, a counselor at the college, told the Associated Press.

Kenyans and others celebrated the day on Twitter, using the hashtag #garissauniversityreopens.

"Education beats terrorism every time," wrote one. "The pen is mightier than the gun," said another.

Indeed, in a week in which the global news offered reports of deepening conflict in the Middle East and rising concerns about nuclear proliferation, the social-media sentiments and sense of optimism offered a welcome respite from the world’s woes.

As 2016 starts in earnest, let’s hope there are more stories like the revival of Garissa to see us through.
Missouri 2016 elections likely to affect state Legislature

BY SUMMER BALLENTINE Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, MO. - Within a half-hour of the start of Missouri's 2016 legislative session, Republican Sen. Kurt Schaefer launched into a criticism on the Senate floor of Democratic President Barack Obama's executive order imposing additional gun control measures.

It marked the first of what could be many speeches this session by lawmakers running for higher office.

Schaefer, who faces a Republican primary for attorney general, is one of at least seven legislators campaigning for statewide executive offices or U.S. Congress. Numerous other state House members will be seeking to move up to the Senate in the 2016 elections.

Political scientists say those dynamics are likely to lead to an increase in political grandstanding and more high-profile bills — in some cases measures related to the office the bills' sponsors are seeking — as lawmakers clamor for public attention.

Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard in an interview before the start of session predicted it will be slow-moving with "a lot of speeches." He opted not to speak in depth on the first day of session Wednesday.

"In an election year, there are probably enough speeches on this floor," said Richard, who is not running for higher office. "I thought I'd save the speeches for my distinguished colleagues."
At least five senators are seeking to move up. In addition to Schaefer, Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, a University City Democrat, is running for a St. Louis-area congressional seat; Lee's Summit Republican Sen. Will Kraus is running for secretary of state; Sen. Mike Parson, a Bolivar Republican, is running for lieutenant governor; and Sen. Eric Schmitt, a Glendale Republican, is campaigning for treasurer.

In the House, Rep. Bill Otto, a Maryland Heights Democrat, is running for another St. Louis-area congressional seat and Rep. Tommie Pierson, a St. Louis Democrat, is running for lieutenant governor.

University of Central Missouri political scientist Robynn Kuhlmann said lawmakers seeking higher office often try to beef up their name recognition, which can be essential in winning elections.

"It definitely behooves lawmakers to get their name out there," she said.

Kuhlmann cited Chappelle-Nadal's activity on Twitter, where she's been calling for action following the fatal police shooting of black 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson in 2014 and for more to be done on buried nuclear waste in the St. Louis area. Chappelle-Nadal said her work as a lawmaker is related to her campaign, because what she described as lack of attention to those issues during her time as a state lawmaker was what pushed her to run for Congress.

Schaefer in particular has come under fire from those who say he has made high-profile moves, such as his work while leading a legislative investigation of abortion practices, to bolster his candidacy.

**Democratic House Minority Leader Jake Hummel on the first day of the session also said Schaefer's calls for two University of Missouri employees to be fired were politically motivated. The school has come under widespread scrutiny following student protests over the perceived indifference by former administrators to racial discrimination on campus and in response to a confrontation between two employees and reporters during protests.**

"One man's quest for attorney general should not dictate how the University of Missouri operates in any way, shape or form," Hummel said in a news conference Wednesday.
Schaefer described Hummel as a "Democrat operative," and said his comments were unsurprising because Democrats don't support holding the university accountable on issues such as a professor's actions during student protests or practices at Planned Parenthood.

Truman State University political scientist Randy Hagerty said lawmakers running for higher office may be apt to take on more high-profile legislation.

"That's not to say that their natural political inclinations don't lean in that direction to begin with," Hagerty said. But "maybe they'll put just a little more focus on those issues that appeal to some of the key interest groups and some of the key demographics that they need."

Kraus, a secretary of state candidate, is sponsoring a bill to require voters to present photo identification at the polls, with some exceptions. The secretary of state supervises elections. He has voted in favor of similar legislation in the past and introduced measures to allow for photo identification before he announced his candidacy. He also mentioned his support for the requirement when he made his announcement in July 2014.

Schmitt this year introduced a measure that would ban the state from investing in companies with active operations in countries designated as state sponsors of terrorism. The treasurer is responsible for state investments.

Schmitt said while the legislation relates to the treasurer's office, it's one of a number of bills he has filed during his time as senator that deal with the responsibilities of a state office. Schmitt said he proposed the legislation in response to the Iran nuclear deal.

The state primary elections are on Aug. 2. The general election is Nov. 8.
University of Missouri temporarily bans hoverboards

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, MO.
The University of Missouri is temporarily banning hoverboards.

The Columbia campus on Friday told students not to bring the motorized two-wheel scooters to school. Officials cited safety concerns.

More than 30 universities nationally have banned or restricted hoverboards on their campuses in recent weeks, saying they're unsafe.

Concerns center on possible falls and collision, as well as warnings from federal authorities that the self-balancing devices have caught on fire.

University of Missouri spokesman Christian Basi says the administration plans to discuss hoverboards with students and other campus community members before enacting a permanent policy.

The spring semester begins Jan. 19.
MU bans hoverboards on campus

Saturday, January 9, 2016 at 12:00 am

The University of Missouri is prohibiting the use of self-balancing scooters, commonly called hoverboards.

MU interim Chancellor Hank Foley, Vice Chancellor of Operations Gary Ward and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs emailed students, faculty and staff Friday about the new policy.

The email said these devices should not be brought to campus and that MU Residential Life amended its rules and regulations to reflect the new policy.

The email also mentioned that the Consumer Product Safety Commission recently raised safety concerns regarding the use of hoverboards.

This is an interim policy and MU could modify it after campus officials further review the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s recommendations and discuss the policy with students, faculty and staff, the email said.

MU, citing safety worries, prohibits hoverboards indoors

JIAYI WANG, SHELBY BASELER, Jan 8, 2016

COLUMBIA — If you found a hoverboard under the Christmas tree, don't bring it to MU.

MU on Friday joined dozens of other colleges with indoor bans on the hands-free scooters. Although they were popular holiday gifts, there are concerns about fire and safety issues.
The ban was based on a U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission statement, MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

Basi said the ban applies to the use or storage of the devices in residence halls, MU apartments, academic buildings and other facilities. Private properties in Greektown are not included. Nor are streets on the campus, because the streets are not owned by MU.

Basi said the ban was temporary and could be modified after reviewing investigations of the consumers safety commission and discussions with students, faculty and staff.

Some students brought the self-balancing scooters to campus last semester, Basi said, but he wasn’t aware of any injuries.

The Consumer Products Safety Commission on Jan. 4 was investigating 28 fires in 19 states related to the devices.

Investigators were working to determine why some models caught fire while the batteries were being charged and why others caught fire while being used, the commission reported.

"Our expert staff is looking particularly closely at the configuration of the battery packs and compatibility with the chargers," according to the December statement from commission Chairman Elliot Kaye.

Falls from the boards have caused concussions, fractures, abrasions and internal injuries. The commission recommends anyone using a hoverboard to wear a helmet and padding.

University Hospital, Providence Urgent Care, Mizzou Urgent Care and Broadway Urgent Care, in response to inquires from the Missourian, reported no hoverboard injuries.
MU dean applies for University of North Dakota president position

By Megan Favignano

Sunday, January 10, 2016 at 12:00 am

University of Missouri College of Education Dean Daniel Clay is among 40 people who applied to be the president of the University of North Dakota.

The application period for the position ended, and UND on Friday released a list of applicants for the job, a requirement of that state’s open records law.

Clay has been dean of MU’s College of Education since 2010, making $247,851 in that role. He has a psychology background and recently received an MBA from MU.

Clay said he was nominated for the UND position and a search firm contacted him, asking him to apply.

Clay said he has been contacted about jobs in the past, however, this position was different.

“We have family roots and a history with that academic institution,” Clay said. “I discussed with” the search firm “the opportunity and the campus … and decided at this point to just explore that a little bit further.”

Clay’s first faculty job was at UND’s School of Medicine. He met his wife, who is an alumna of UND, while they were both working in UND’s hospital. Additionally, Clay’s wife is from North Dakota, and he has family nearby as well.

Off-campus interviews are set for Feb. 1-2, and the university will bring final candidates to campus between Feb. 11 and March 3, according to the university’s website.

The search committee will recommend candidates to the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, which will meet on campus in mid-March.

Trigger Warnings: Not the Greatest Threat to Higher Education

After recent events at the University of Missouri and elsewhere, I wonder whether Scott Bass and Mary Clark, administrators at the American University, wish they had been able to see into the future when they wrote in *The Chronicle* back in September:

"We are experiencing one of the greatest threats to the university as we know it. It is not about enrollments, revenues, regulation, rankings, or leadership. It is about the ability to engage in unfettered debate at American colleges. It is about the assurance of intellectual freedom, about what can and cannot be discussed. … Colleges face criticism from students and others uncomfortable with the points of view expressed in the classroom and by individual faculty members."

The fear that hypersensitive students are threats to academic freedom is one with which most professors readily sympathize. The danger that comes from upsetting our "anguished" students is real; there is even scientific evidence that today’s young adults are less resilient than earlier generations. Faculty members who fail to respect those feelings may face severe consequences. We’ve all read the horror stories about professors who say the wrong thing at the wrong time and end up jobless.

Professor Laura Kipnis has argued that feminist paranoia is partly to blame: "The melodramatic imagination’s obsession with helpless victims and powerful predators is what’s shaping the conversation of the moment. … The result? Students’ sense of vulnerability is skyrocketing."

Alternatively, Bass and Clark suggested that a consumer mentality is the problem; students feel "they are paying for the experience [of college] and should have a say in what they are exposed to and taught." The more they pay, the more entitled they feel to be not offended by what they learn. It is therefore unsurprising that, until recently, most of the highest-profile demands for
sensitivity to students’ feelings came from elite institutions: Middlebury, Yale, Duke, Mount Holyoke, Wellesley, Princeton, Oberlin, Hampshire, Northwestern, UCLA, and Columbia, to name a few.

In light of this fall’s many campus protests against systemic racism, the claim that student fragility is the greatest threat to college seems like an overstatement at best. At worst, it may wrongly trivialize the cause, at the expense of confronting serious problems. What we have seen undermines the idea — popular among those who already chafe at political correctness — that students are asking for “day care” in place of education. Such an attitude often says more about the self-interest of those who resent the complaints than about the protesters themselves.

In addition to racism (and its counterpart, white entitlement), at least a dozen threats to higher education as a whole are more pressing than that of the sensitive student. Not least is an aversion to accountability among faculty members and administrators. Other issues include terrible public high schools, administrative bloat, unsustainable business models, crumbling infrastructure, shortsighted boards, the death (or suicide) of the liberal arts, micromanaging donors, students’ alcohol abuse, sexual assault, terrible salaries, politicians who criticize higher education to score points with voters, program cuts, unstable investments in endowments, ranking systems that favor rich colleges, shrinking birth rates among college-educated parents, out-of-control athletics costs, and the imminent death of the college-going American middle class.

Rather than pointing at our sensitive students, it would be more accurate for us to say that the gravest threat to American higher education is American culture. Most Americans simply don’t have the energy to worry about intangibles like professors’ academic freedom; they’re too busy trying to get jobs with living wages and health benefits, whether as welders or philosophers. It is perfectly human for professors to want to protect our own interests before those of students. The classroom may be the last sphere in which we feel some small measure of freedom and control. Without that, what do we have left besides better-than-average vacation time?
Is it really so onerous to consider how what we say might damage our students’ ability to learn? Many students in the past apparently accepted sexism and racism as facts of life; they expected to be marginalized by their professors — asked to speak for "all blacks" or shamed for being "distracting" to the men around them. Students today no longer accept those things, and that is all to the good. In light of this cultural awakening, we should happily make a good-faith effort to examine ourselves and #WatchWhatWeSay, especially if we are among the privileged, tenured, white, able-bodied elite. We should also be ready to stand up for our colleagues who are not so privileged.

Life everywhere is unstable and full of loss, as any adjunct or other wage earner already knows. Why should academic lives be any different? Instead of protecting ourselves, let’s do something radical and put student learning first. But let’s also be willing to take risks for the right reasons. Let’s tell the truth as we see it — even if it means facing censure or leaving our students a little bruised — and take the consequences. If we aren’t willing to do that, then perhaps the greatest threat to colleges does come from within after all, in the form of academics who are courageous only when we are certain it won’t cost us anything.

*Kathryn D. Blanchard is an associate professor of religious studies at Alma College.*

**MISSOURIAN**

City backs off storage of drinking water in underground aquifer

JENNIFER LU, 2 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — When Columbia first converted two of its old deep wells to store treated drinking water, engineers and officials lauded the new technology as an economical alternative to water towers.

Twelve years in, the experiment has fallen out of favor.
The Missouri Department of Natural Resources is requiring additional geological and chemical testing of the aquifer as a prerequisite for renewing a permit that allows for storing water underground.

The city spent $858,100 on the two wells to accommodate water storage in the aquifer, but they have seen little use.

Water and Light Director Tad Johnsen, in an October letter to the Water and Light Advisory Board, recommended the city let the permits for the underground water storage expire in June. The Water and Light Advisory Board agrees, Assistant Director Ryan Williams said.

In 2003 and 2008, Columbia converted two of the city’s deep wells, which were abandoned in the early 1970s when the city began piping water from the Missouri River bottoms near McBaine for aquifer storage and recovery.

The treated drinking water from McBaine — 40 million to 100 million gallons a year — was injected into the old wells that tap the Ozarks Plateau aquifer beneath the city. The new water sits “in a bubble” over the groundwater in the aquifer, Williams said.

“Back in 2000, someone thought it would be a really good (idea) to pour treated water down the hole,” Williams said. "At the time we were doing it, it was a relatively new science. The way we were originally sold it, it was like free or almost free storage, if you will."

According to aquifer storage and recovery principles, the treated water and the existing groundwater should not mix, he said. That means the city can pump up softened, treated water for consumption as needed.

The advantages of injecting and withdrawing water became less attractive with the state requiring an analysis to show that the treated water did not react with the existing water or the aquifer rock, Williams said.
“Essentially, they’re wanting us to develop a pretty precise geological model of the aquifer and then go into the mathematical hydrology model and prove where that plume that we inject is,” Williams said. “Prove to us that it’s staying where you said it is and it’s not migrating.”

To retain the system, the city must report:

- The chemistry of the injected water, native water and when they're mixed.
- How the treated water reacts with underground rock.
- Whether the process disturbs other aquifers around the well site.
- The direction and extent the treated water travels underground.
- The tests would cost an estimated $300,000, according to Johnson’s memorandum.

In November 2014, Water and Light's engineering department approached Martin Appold, an associate professor in geological sciences at MU, to submit a proposal for conducting tests. Appold studies how underground water transports dissolved minerals as it travels through aquifers, including the Ozarks Plateau aquifer.

Groundwater trickles through aquifers at rates of a few millimeters to a few meters per year, he said. “It typically takes a long time for a plume to move from its source.”

A standard test measuring rock permeability at different depths would allow him to model more precisely how the drinking water and the groundwater move through the aquifer, Appold said.

Testing water chemistry was as straightforward as collecting groundwater samples across the city from wells that tap into the aquifer, samples of city drinking water piped in from the McBaine water treatment plant, and mixed samples of the two waters at different ratios, then analyzing the samples through an instrument that can detect dissolved elements in concentrations as low as 10 parts per billion.

Based on the composition of the mixed waters, Appold said, he can predict the solubility of different rocks and minerals found in the aquifer when exposed to the mixed waters.
The Ozarks Plateau aquifer is composed of limestone, dolomite and sandstone.

While there is a slight chance that the aquifer contains traces of minerals that might release toxic heavy metals such as arsenic or lead when dissolved in the treated water, Appold said he suspected that dissolved calcium and magnesium, which contribute to the "hardness" of the water, were far more likely.

“The way to be sure from a liability standpoint is to test it,” Appold said.

Columbia uses between 4 billion to 5 billion gallons of water per year, according to a 2015 Water and Light report.

In comparison, stored water drawn from the deep wells decreased from 48.4 million gallons in 2005 to 2 million gallons in 2009, according to the memo Johnsen presented to the Water and Light Advisory Board.

About 19.3 million gallons of stored drinking water were used in 2012. That year was exceptionally dry, water treatment plant manager Michael Anderson said. “Everyone was trying to save their grass that year.”

When the city lets the permits expire, the wells will no longer store drinking water from the treatment plant, Williams said.

They will still be used as a backup water supply, but groundwater drawn up for consumption during emergencies would require a live boil order, he said.

**No Longer Bystanders**

*By William G. Durden, president emeritus of Dickinson College and a professor in the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University. He is also the chief global engagement officer at Shorelight Education.*
The wave of student activism sweeping across America’s college and university campuses is not surprising, given the growing complexities that come with increasingly diverse student bodies. Colleges and universities are, of course, democratic institutions intended to ready young people for informed participation and leadership in other democratic institutions. Debate, protest, idealism, exercising one’s voice, the demand for something better than what is, as well as the absorption of new knowledge and critical-thinking skills are all essential components of an education in a democracy.

It can be a messy and often painful process -- witnessing extreme positions and clashes of ideologies. Yet it defines who we are as an educating nation that does not just mechanically convey unexamined information from one generation to another. What is surprising, however, is that international students are also now speaking out. They have come to American higher education without indigenous historic precedent and are contemporary De Tocquevilles -- touring our country for the first time and commenting upon what they see, whether good or bad.

In fact, today there is a sense of urgency for American college and university senior leadership to commit to a far more robust infrastructure to support international students. Such action is especially important on behalf of Muslim students, given world events. When talking to these students, they voice real fear about how they are going to be treated on and off American campuses as terrorism increases abroad and in the United States and as campus communities are directly affected by tragic loss. For example, at least five alumni of California State University San Bernardino died in the December ISIS-inspired terrorist attack in San Bernardino.

That said, campus leaders should pay much more attention to all students from abroad, whatever their religion, culture or background.

In past periods of activism, international students remained essentially silent. They were bystanders. That has now changed. They are practicing American-style democracy. They appear to view themselves as “insiders” with a voice to exercise and the ability to influence the space in which they find themselves: the university. They reject statements or actions that judge them as “outsiders” -- or simply as “key data points of accountability” often used to fulfill institutional budgets. Current student activists of all persuasions, including a growing number of international students, would reject -- perhaps as cowardly -- any approach to difference and being “outside” of what is thought to be the “establishment.” For them, being an outsider --
as they define it as absent a voice of power and influence -- is unacceptable. And indeed it is, if that outsider is subjected to personal ridicule and violence merely because of who he or she is, or if he or she must confront systemic cultural, financial and social obstacles to ever having the opportunity to be part of and lead in what is thought to be “inside.”

**Asking to Be Heard**

International students are, of course, big business for colleges and universities. Certainly they fulfill an important diversity goal, but they are also often full-paying students and contribute significantly to institutions’ revenues in an atmosphere of cutbacks in state funding. They also help solve what has become a problem of excess capacity on many campuses.

The 2015 Institute of International Education “Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange,” supported by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, found that the number of international students at American colleges and universities had the highest rate of growth in 35 years, increasing to a record high of 974,926 students in the 2014-15 academic year. International students contribute more than an estimated $30 billion to the U.S. economy in all 50 states.

The IIE report focuses, however, exclusively on access and trends, not on the qualitative experience once international students arrive on American campuses. Yet it is precisely here that one hears the international students’ voice as part of the current activism. It is all about the quality of the educational experience broadly defined. While the voices of international students are far fewer than those of other students, they are asking to be heard. For example, according to an article in *The New York Times*, an international student engaged in student protests at Amherst College reportedly said that “he felt like the title character of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, a book he had read on his own in college. ‘You’re here and you’re seen, but maybe you’re not seen for who you are,’ he said.”

And an article posted in November on the Dickinson College website, “Students Spark Conversation on Inclusivity,” states, “An international student from Vietnam spoke [at an all-campus event] about the ‘marginalization of international students.’ ‘Dickinson advertises itself as diverse, but I don’t know if my definition of diversity is the same as Dickinson’s,’ [the student said,] adding that she has ‘always felt like an outsider’ to conversations about diversity on campus.”

Such sentiments are not, of course, peculiar to the two institutions mentioned but could readily apply to statements that international students on campuses throughout the United States are making publicly. When I hear such comments, I try to understand
precisely why these young students express such sentiments about themselves and about those with whom they come in contact on campuses.

Two initial explanations surface. First, because many of these international students come from wealthy, more privileged families in their home countries, they probably have never before been treated as “outsiders” -- or have never even considered themselves as such. In addition, while some of them share historic racial identities with American students, they have not experienced in their home countries the same type of racial prejudice as those students -- prejudice to which they, too, may now be subjected. They are dumbfounded and confused. They find their identities have been challenged. Meanwhile, for their part, American students who share a racial heritage with international students often have difficulty understanding them; while their appearances are similar, their lives are not.

A few personal experiences have perhaps helped me to gain further understanding of international students’ perspectives. I live in Baltimore and have done so for some 35-plus years. As is well known, Baltimore, like many large urban centers in America, is plagued by a set of seemingly intractable problems dealing with race, prejudice, violence, abuse, neglect, poverty, drugs and a lack of quality education and child care. This toxic mix, catalyzed by the April death of Freddie Gray, led to a day of rioting last year.

In an interview with the press, a gentleman from the direct environs of the rioting said something to this effect: “The problem is that to many people I am simply invisible. Nobody says ‘hello’ to me. Nobody nods to me. Nobody recognizes me as a person with something to say. Nobody listens to me. People make assumptions about me on the basis of my color and where I come from -- assumptions that I do not have a life and I have zero to contribute to the common good. In fact, people move away from me because they mistakenly think I am dangerous. But I am a person and have something to say -- both as an individual and on the basis of my distinctive experience. I need a place to say what I have to say, but there just isn’t that place.”

My second personal experience occurred shortly after 9/11 at Dickinson College, where I was then president. The U.S. State Department had given the college a series of grants to “orient” students from the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia to “the American lifestyle and culture.” The goal was to cultivate potential friends to the United States in territories that increasingly appeared to be breeding grounds for terrorists. The State Department reviewed and approved a curriculum the Dickinson faculty designed that highlighted the good and the less appealing aspects of the contemporary United States.
But it was all about America. After a week or so of instruction, we noticed that the international students were unhappy, disappointed and, in some cases, angry. When we probed further to discover why, the result was illuminating. The problem was that the curriculum left no space for these international participants to talk about the virtues of their own respective cultures. The exclusive focus on the United States signified to them that the good that they had absorbed from those cultures was inapplicable to the international stage and they had nothing to contribute to global challenges and opportunities. They felt invisible and without substance. They felt dismissed.

We heard them clearly, and we immediately altered the curriculum to permit individuals or teams from each represented culture to present their story and to indicate how they thought some of what they already possessed could in fact benefit American culture and lifestyle going forward. We listened to them carefully, respected them as people with something to say and indicated that we did not have all the answers and were open to their distinct points of view. From then on, the program was much more positively received as mutual respect emerged through the intentional sharing of cultures. That purposeful recognition of the students’ respective identities, in fact, enabled the curricular objectives to be achieved.

**Engaging International Students as Full Participants**

Based on those two personal experiences, what I think international students are saying is that they are not really being deliberately listened to on American campuses - and thus any claim to diversity by American institutions is specious. We in higher education avidly pursue them for admission, but then once they arrive here, we essentially neglect them. Their different perspectives and desire to grow as individuals in the meeting of cultures find no forum for recognition and engagement. Further, we don’t provide any avenues for them to influence positively the issues before the American campus and its students. Indeed, our institutions are perplexed about how to engage international students to maximize the benefit of their experience and that of the American students who interact with them.

What should be done? People and departments must pay much more informed and sustained attention to international students once they are on our campuses. Right now, such attention is, at best, erratic. Few staff members are dedicated to international students, and they can sometimes be located in the admissions office, sometimes in the office of student life and sometimes in what are called international offices that focus primarily on sending American students overseas.

The abstract of a study based on the National Survey of Student Engagement, “A Comparison of International Student and American Student Engagement in Effective Educational Practice,” asserts that “although international students are an important source of diversity on American college campuses, relatively little is known about their
college experiences.” We must pursue far more research to understand the needs and potential of international students if the diversity so readily claimed by their presence is to be performative in any educationally substantive way.

International students seem to desire an approach that I call “learner-sourced education.” It is most graphically described through art. In Man With a Blue Scarf: On Sitting for a Portrait by Lucian Freud, Martin Gaylord cites the painter’s words when working with his live subjects: “After a sitting I like to join as far as possible in the feelings and emotions of my models. In a way, I don’t want the picture to come from me, I want it to come from them.” Gaylord’s words suggest to me a way that professors and students might interact that would fulfill these international students’ demands not only for themselves but also all students.

They want to be treated as “full participants” on the college campus and later in the broader global society. They replace the transformative power of difference with the power of inclusion. Being “different” and “outside” the mainstream are no longer sources of power and virtue as they might have been for earlier generations such as mine in the late ’60s and ’70s.

International students appear now to want to be heard and treated as the distinctive people they are because of the cultural and individual difference they bring to the prevailing institutional culture. They want to be engaged and listened to so they can affect and ultimately be part of the activities of all with whom they come in contact. They want to be seen and heard as who they unabashedly are. And on that authentic basis, they want to no longer be treated as undifferentiated stereotypes -- often invisible and, in the worst cases, despised -- but rather as individuals who are able to contribute to solving our seemingly intractable shared global challenges.

Guzmán interview draws fire for journalistic compromises

In his instantly controversial Rolling Stone article about Mexican drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzmán, actor Sean Penn cites “weeks of clandestine planning” that went into securing an interview with one of the world’s most wanted men, including Penn’s use of encrypted email messages, code names and disposable “burner” phones.
What Rolling Stone and Penn did not detail, however, were the background negotiations that led to the interview and publication of Penn’s 10,000-word piece Saturday. The story offered only this eye-opening paragraph: “Disclosure: Some names have had to be changed, locations not named, and an understanding was brokered with the subject that this piece would be submitted for the subject’s approval before publication. The subject did not ask for any changes.”

The deal raised alarms among media watchers: Journalists occasionally give sources pre-publication approval over their quotes, but even that practice is considered controversial. The idea that an entire article would be submitted “for the subject’s approval” prior to publication is almost unheard of and raises the potential for unorthodox compromises.

“Allowing any source control over a story’s content is inexcusable,” Andrew Seaman, chairman of the ethics committee of the Society of Professional Journalists, wrote on the organization’s blog late Saturday night, shortly after Rolling Stone posted its story. “The practice of pre-approval discredits the entire story — whether the subject requests changes or not.”

The reason: Such an agreement creates a built-in incentive to avoid unfavorable or unflattering facts in hopes of winning a source’s approval.

“I can’t think of a news organization that would have agreed to those circumstances,” said Barbara Cochran, a journalism professor at the University of Missouri and a former Washington bureau chief for CBS News. “News organizations don’t even like to submit questions in advance, let alone whole articles.”

Rolling Stone’s compromise in this case is all the more striking because its journalistic reputation has remained under a cloud since its publication in November 2014 of a now-discredited article about an alleged gang rape at a fraternity at the University of Virginia. The magazine is facing three defamation lawsuits for the story.

A spokeswoman for Rolling Stone said Sunday that the magazine would respond to questions about the Penn article, but then did not reply to subsequent inquiries.

Rolling Stone has a distinguished history of in-depth reporting on politics and national and international affairs, but its best and best-known work has almost always been conducted by its journalists. Penn, an actor and activist, is not a journalist, although he has interviewed such figures as Cuban president Raul Castro and the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and has occasionally written for such publication as the Nation and the San Francisco Chronicle.

Penn’s apparent admiration, or at least empathy, for Guzmán may have played as much of a role in securing his cooperation as his promise to allow Guzmán to review his story.

Despite occasionally acknowledging the chaos El Chapo’s drug syndicate and others have sown in Mexico and in the United States, Penn portrays Guzmán as a poor peasant driven by economic desperation into the drug trade. He describes him as “a second president of Mexico” with “an indisputable charisma” who flashes “a warm smile” throughout their seven-hour meeting in an
undisclosed location. Penn’s sense of menace and threat is leavened by his descriptions of Guzmán’s embrace of his family, particularly his two sons.

This is similar to Penn’s description of Castro during a seven-hour chat with the Cuban president in Havana in 2008. In that piece, published by the liberal Nation magazine, Penn wrote that Castro was “warm, open, energetic and sharp of wit.”

Penn also suggests repeatedly that Americans are hypocritical in their efforts to fight the drug cartels, writing, “Are we, the American public, not indeed complicit in what we demonize? We are the consumers, and as such, we are complicit in every murder, and in every corruption of an institution’s ability to protect the quality of life for citizens of Mexico and the United States that comes as a result of our insatiable appetite for illicit narcotics.”

In Penn’s account, Guzmán seems to have been intrigued by Penn’s activism and by the prospect of a movie about his life ("he was interested in seeing the story of his life told on film"). The meeting was brokered by Kate del Castillo, a Mexican actress who apparently had gained El Chapo’s trust through a series of sympathetic tweets in 2012. Del Castillo made inquiries about an interview through Guzmán’s attorneys.

This is also potentially compromising, Cochran said. If Guzmán, Penn and Rolling Stone were acting on an implied or explicit promise of a movie deal, it would represent a quid pro quo that compromises the independence of Penn’s reporting, she said.

When del Castillo received a favorable reply about an interview from Guzmán’s associates, Penn wrote that he called Rolling Stone publisher and co-founder Jann Wenner, who gave the assignment to Penn, and — inexplicably — two Guzmán associates, identified in the article as Espinoza and El Alto. He said that Wenner gave him a letter “officiating” the project, but he doesn’t explain what this meant.

Penn’s article contains at least one newsworthy nugget — a boast/confession from Guzmán about his role in the drug trade, which he has previously denied. “El Chapo sticks to an illicit game,” Penn writes, “proudly volunteering, ‘I supply more heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana than anybody else in the world. I have a fleet of submarines, airplanes, trucks and boats.’”

The story drew its share of derision online, and not just from media ethicists. Andy Borowitz, the New Yorker’s satirist, quickly posted a parody news article Sunday afternoon headlined, “ISIS Chief Abruptly Cancels Meeting with Sean Penn.”

At one point, the news site Deadline Hollywood picked up the story, presenting it as straight news. It later removed the story, posting instead an apology to Penn.