Grad Student Health Insurance On the Line
Universities grapple with providing subsidized health insurance to graduate students while complying with the Affordable Care Act. Seventeen U.S. senators urge the government to give institutions clarification.

For Chereta Quána Madison, access to subsidized student health insurance was literally a matter of life or death.

Madison, a Ph.D. student in educational foundations, policy and practices at the University of Colorado at Boulder, started collapsing in public last January. By the end of February, she was confined to bed, watching videos of her classes because she couldn’t walk without debilitating pain.

Her graduate adviser suggested that she take a medical leave of absence. But Madison refused. If she was no longer enrolled, she would lose access to the Student Gold Health Insurance that could help cover a host of evaluations and surgeries. Like Madison -- who was ultimately diagnosed with early-stage ovarian and uterine cancer -- graduate students across the country are struggling to maintain access to subsidized health insurance. But unlike Madison, their access is being jeopardized by confusion over whether universities can provide subsidized health insurance to graduate students while complying with the Affordable Care Act.

When the ACA was enacted in 2010, many institutions were providing graduate students with student health coverage at reduced or no cost as part of their benefit package. In particular, many universities were using arrangements designed to pay for student health insurance through a credit, offset, reimbursement or stipend.

But in 2013, the Internal Revenue Service issued guidance that said employer payment plans could not be integrated with individual insurance coverage. In other words, employers could not provide money to employees for the purposes of purchasing individual health insurance.

In February, the IRS released a further notice that said providing subsidized health insurance for graduate students may violate the ACA. The notice relied on two lines of reasoning. The first was that U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' regulations define student health insurance as individual health insurance. The second was that graduate students engaged in teaching and research assistance fall under the
common law definition of employees, and thus the arrangements that reduced their premiums might be an impermissible employer payment plan. The February notice provided temporary transition relief, which allowed institutions to continue offering subsidies through the 2016-17 academic year. But for many universities, the path after this year remains unclear.

Federal agencies “haven’t really provided schools with a road map about how they’re supposed to comply with the Affordable Care Act,” said Steven Bloom, director of government relations for the American Council on Education. “The position of the government thus far is potentially detrimental for graduate students.”

**Senators Step In**

Seventeen Democratic senators issued a letter last week urging the Obama administration to clarify that universities can provide subsidized health insurance to graduate students while complying with the ACA.

The letter calls for the government to provide swift clarification, as many universities will soon negotiate the terms of their student health insurance coverage for the upcoming academic year. “Thousands of graduate students at campuses across the country could potentially be affected, costing students and schools millions of dollars,” the letter reads.

The letter points to the February IRS notice as advancing a problematic interpretation of the law. “IRS Notice 2016-17 allowed institutions to continue offering subsidized coverage for most graduate students in the 2016-17 academic year, enabling many students to continue to receive health care coverage this year,” the letter reads. “However, it also reiterated an interpretation of the law that could jeopardize graduate students’ access to health coverage.”

“I was very pleased to see the senators’ letter, because I think it addresses some very pressing and important issues for graduate education,” said Barbara Knuth, senior vice provost and dean of the graduate school at Cornell University and former chair of the board of directors of the Council of Graduate Schools. “The letter was clear and very helpful in pointing out how the guidance that was issued was inconsistent with the goals associated with the Affordable Care Act.”

Bloom said the letter illustrates the national importance of the issue of health insurance for graduate students. “It’s pretty significant that that many senators would take a position on this,” he said. “It shows their interest in advancing a goal of the Affordable Care Act, which is ensuring that graduate students get access to high-quality, affordable health insurance.”
Kristofferson Culmer, graduate student at the University of Missouri and president and CEO of the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students, said the association supports the intent behind the letter. “However the law is applied and interpreted, we don’t want to see graduate students disadvantaged with regards to benefits that they really need to survive throughout their academic careers,” he said.

Graduate students with spouses or children especially stand to benefit from subsidized health insurance, Culmer said. A family plan can cost about a third of a graduate assistant's average annual income.

The letter ultimately plays into a longstanding debate about whether graduate students should be viewed as employees or students, Culmer said. This debate has often flared in the context of graduate students' unionization efforts, since employees are entitled to collective bargaining rights.

"There are a number of campuses where graduate student bodies are seeking to recognize themselves as employees," Culmer said. "Our association supports students' rights to self-determination in terms of how they want to be viewed by their university."

'Up in the Air'
Institutions across the country are currently grappling with shaping new policies on health insurance for graduate students after this academic year. The University of Missouri in particular has generated debate over its handling of the matter. Last summer, Missouri announced that it would cancel graduate student health insurance subsidies in an effort to comply with the 2013 IRS guidance. Administrators explained that this guidance threatened to impose steep fines - up to $36,500 per student per year -- on institutions that offered graduate students subsidies for the purposes of buying individual health insurance from market plans.

But after graduate student workers planned a walkout in protest, Missouri reversed its decision and pledged to continue offering graduate students health insurance subsidies through this academic year. R. Bowen Loftin, the system's chancellor at the time, also charged a task force with identifying alternative ways of providing graduate students with subsidized health insurance in the future.

“We have committed to offering the same health insurance plan to graduate students this coming academic year that we currently offer,” said Christian Basi, associate director of the news bureau at the University of Missouri. “We’re going to do our best to
continue to meet their health insurance needs as the federal government clarifies the law in this area.”

In its final report last fall, the Missouri task force recommended that the administration consider three options: providing graduate assistant students with financial fellowships, increasing their stipends or offering them an additional silver-level insurance plan. The report noted that the silver-level plan “provides a lower actuarially determined benefit, but the premiums are lower cost.”

But Culmer, who is also a doctoral candidate at Missouri, said the three options largely met with disapproval from the graduate student body. “All three options were inferior to the way we were being provided insurance at the time,” he said. “Students and the community voiced concerns to keep the status quo.”

“The 2017-18 academic year is up in the air right now,” Culmer added. “Students are going to work with the administration productively on this issue this year.”

While Missouri has generated controversy over its policy on health insurance for graduate students, Cornell has been re-examining its policy with little fanfare. Graduate students at Cornell are currently issued a platinum-level plan that comes with lower out-of-pocket costs, including lower co-pays and deductibles, Knuth said. But administrators are weighing two alternative options for providing health insurance to graduate students after this academic year, she said.

The first option would be to start including graduate students in the employee health insurance plan, Knuth said. But this option essentially entails "worse coverage at a higher cost," she said. "Costs would go up for Cornell by about $11 million per year, with students getting worse coverage."

The second option would be to start issuing graduate students a qualified group plan on the open market. Before pursuing this option, administrators would conduct an analysis of whether it would provide satisfactory coverage for students, Knuth said. Looking ahead, Knuth remains optimistic that the government will see the merit of letting universities continue offering subsidies to graduate students as in the past. "I don't have predictions -- I just have optimism and hope," she said.
MU receives gift from State Farm to support academic programs

COLUMBIA — State Farm Insurance donated $128,600 to five MU academic programs this year.

MU accepted the gift as part of the “Mizzou: Our Time to Lead” fundraising campaign. The campaign hopes to raise $1.3 billion, and was publicly announced in October.

State Farm has donated more than $1.8 million to the university via multiple fundraising campaigns. This donation will support five academic programs, and State Farm decided how much money was given to each program. They divided the money so that:

- $48,600 will go to the Fire Rescue Training Institute to help train emergency responders for highway accidents.
- $25,000 will go to the Frank L. Mitchell Jr. MD Trauma Center for motor vehicle crash outreach, to help reduce crashes among older drivers and support reporting of impaired drivers.
- $25,000 will go to the MU Trulaske College of Business Risk Management and Insurance program. The program was first created in 2015 with another donation from State Farm.
- $20,000 will go to the College of Human Environmental Sciences Office for Financial Success, to help the program create educational workshops, weekly financial tips and tax preparation lessons.
- $10,000 will go to the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences’ Family Impact Center, to support the center’s training efforts with financial literacy and behavioral health care through therapy.

This year’s donation from State Farm brings the total amount of money the company has given to the “Our Time to Lead” campaign to $520,600.
An MU News Bureau news release from October said the campaign “will support signature centers, new academic buildings and increase endowment.” The fundraising effort raised over $650 million before the campaign was announced publicly.

“We are thrilled to celebrate the generosity of State Farm,” Tom Hiles, MU Vice Chancellor for advancement, said in a news release. "We thank them for their vision.”

MU's last major fundraising effort, which finished in 2009, raised more than $1 billion.

State Farm gives money to five MU programs

Tuesday, June 28, 2016 at 2:00 pm

**Five programs at the University of Missouri are sharing $128,600 donated by State Farm Insurance Co., with the largest share set aside to support MU Extension’s Fire and Rescue Training Institute.**

The institute will use $48,600 to train 750 firefighters and emergency responders in techniques for quickly stabilizing and removing injured people from vehicles damaged in accidents, a news release from the university said.

An additional $25,000 will pay for a program at the Frank L. Mitchell Jr. MD Trauma Center that helps older adults who are considering whether to give up driving with peer-to-peer counseling and additional training for medical professionals evaluating older drivers.

The other gift recipients are:

- The Risk Management and Insurance Program of the Trulaske College of Business, established with help from State Farm, which will receive $25,000 in continued support.
- The Office for Financial Success in the College of Human Environmental Science, which will use the $20,000 gift to support student understanding of personal finance, counsel students on debt and provide free tax assistance to low-income Columbia residents.
• The Family Impact Center of the College of Human Environmental Sciences, which will receive $10,000 from State Farm to support its programs for financial literacy, behavioral health and strengthening families.

State Farm recognized for $128,600 donation to MU

COLUMBIA - Officials from the University of Missouri recognized State Farm Insurance Company today for their recent donation of $128,600 to various programs at MU, according to the MU News Bureau.

“We are thrilled to celebrate the generosity of State Farm and Mizzou’s long-standing partnership with the company,” said Tom Hiles, MU vice chancellor for advancement.

The News Bureau said the donation came as a gift to the Family Impact Center, Fire and Rescue Training Institute, Frank Mitchell Trauma Center for Motor Vehicle Crash Outreach, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business’s Risk Management and Insurance Program and College of Human Environmental Sciences Office for Financial Success.

A mid-Missouri community support organization, Columbia's Family Impact Center, received a $10,000 donation.

The director of the Family Impact Center, Ashley Guillemette, said the donation will be used for a variety of purposes, but primarily for renovating the center's financial counseling program offices. Additional uses for the funding include marketing materials, administrative assistance salaries, and general expenses.

The gift to the Fire and Rescue Training Institute, or FRTI, will fund training for Missouri emergency responders to highway incidents. It will sponsor 30 courses and provide training to an estimated 750 firefighters and emergency responders. Training will include lessons for responders about quick stabilization and removal of accident victims to improve patient survival and preventing addition injuries. The course is requested more than any other course offered by FRTI.
State Farm donated $48,600 to FRTI, according to the News Bureau.

The News Bureau said State Farm also donated $25,000 to the Frank Mitchell Trauma Center for Motor Vehicle Crash Outreach. The donation builds on previous gifts that demonstrated peer-to-peer counseling improves outcomes among older adults who are considering the transition to driving retirement. The goal of these donations and the project as a whole is to reduce crashes among older drivers, increase access to web-based information and training materials for professionals and support appropriate reporting of impaired drivers for further evaluation.

The MU News Bureau said Trulaske College of Business Risk Management and Insurance program received $25,000 for continued support from State Farm. An investment from State Farm's support allowed the program to hire a director, design and implement a curriculum that will prepare students for the field and market the new course of study to students interested in risk management.

The College of Human Environmental Sciences Office for Financial Success received $20,000 from State Farm. The program provides valuable financial counseling and resources like weekly financial tips and tax preparation, according to the News Bureau.

Hiles said, “State Farm’s continued support in important MU community outreach programs shows their dedication and investment in bettering the community and state, and we thank them for their vision.”

The MU News Bureau said State Farm's total donation amount to the Mizzou: Our Time to Lead campaign is now at $520,600.

MU recognizes recent State Farm gift

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Officials at the University of Missouri today recognized State Farm Insurance Company for a recent donation to the Mizzou: Our Time to Lead campaign.

The gift is for $128,600, and will go to several MU programs, including:

- MU Extension’s Fire and Rescue Training Institute
- MU Health Care’s Frank Mitchell Trauma Center for Motor Vehicle Crash Outreach
- Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business’s Risk Management and Insurance Program
In a statement, the university said the *Mizzou: Our Time to Lead* campaign focuses on endowment, signature centers and institutes, and a campus renaissance to solidify its place among the nation's "elite" public universities.

The gift brings State Farm's total giving to the campaign to $520,600. It also brings State Farm's total giving to MU to more than $1.8 million.

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**State Farm gift supports MU programs**

By Mark Slavit Tuesday, June 28th 2016

Columbia, MO — *State Farm Insurance officials donated $128,600 to Mizzou.*

The money supports several University of Missouri programs that help improve the quality of life in our state.

The programs involve everything from vehicle crash research to financial counseling.

The MU Fire Rescue Training Institute received $48,600 for providing training courses to more than 700 firefighters and emergency responders throughout the state.

FRTI Director David Hedrick said, "Part of the Fire Rescue Training Institute's mission is to ensure safer firefighters, safer citizens and safer communities. This fits very well into State Farm's approach."

State Farm's giving total to MU is now more than $1.8 million.
Missouri governor says he doesn't want to be UM president

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 16 hrs ago


JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon says he doesn't want to be president of the University of Missouri System.

Nixon told reporters Tuesday that he's not seeking the position and won't accept it if it's offered to him.

The UM System Board of Curators is searching for a new president. The former president resigned in November amid student protests at MU over what some saw as administrators' indifference to racial issues.
Mike Middleton is leading the university system on an interim basis.

Nixon, a Democrat, is barred by term limits from seeking re-election. His final term ends in January.

**THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**AAUP Rethinks How It Fights Governing Boards**

When the nation’s leading defender of faculty rights decides to rebuke a college, its precise language may leave close observers scratching their heads. Why, for instance, did it vote this month to sanction the University of Iowa over its controversial presidential search, instead of the board, which it explicitly identified as the bad actor?

The answer: It has long believed it has no other choice.

The American Association of University Professors imposes a penalty known as "sanction" against colleges for violations of shared governance, but its bylaws preclude it from directing sanctions at governing boards, no matter how responsible they might be. It imposes a separate category of penalty, "censure," for violations of tenure or academic freedom. With censures it has the option of directing the rebuke at the board, but it almost always opts to censure the college itself if administrators have any culpability.

Experience has taught the association that governing boards will shrug off its warnings and reprimands unless they’re convinced that their actions will cause a college to suffer from being on the AAUP’s lists of censured or sanctioned institutions.
Recent developments, however, have prompted the AAUP to begin reconsidering how it challenges boards.

The weaknesses of its current approach came into focus at its annual meeting here this month. Top officials of the association bemoaned how it is struggling to fight off increasingly common board overreach in colleges’ affairs, and heard faculty leaders at the University of Iowa protest the AAUP’s sanction of that institution for the actions of a statewide governing board.

In response, the AAUP plans to establish a panel to seek new ways for it to exert pressure on colleges. It also will be reconsidering its policy of sanctioning colleges when their boards trample shared governance.

The AAUP historically has directed its criticisms at colleges’ administrations, rather than their boards, because boards "are less connected to the campus," says Henry F. (Hank) Reichman, chairman of the association’s Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure and a professor emeritus of history at California State University-East Bay. "It is more effective," he says, "to sanction or censure the campus administration because they are the ones who have more of a long-term interest in trying to get off the list."

That said, the AAUP’s leaders have acknowledged that its policies might need to be revised, Mr. Reichman says. "We have been around over 100 years," he says. "We have a certain stodginess to us, but we have lasted over 100 years by changing over time."

Multiple Battlefronts

The University of Iowa case represented the toughest test of the limits of AAUP policies confronted at the association’s recent meeting. The AAUP voted to sanction the university based on a finding that the statewide Iowa Board of Regents had
disregarded overwhelming faculty opposition in appointing J. Bruce Harreld, a business consultant, as that institution’s new president. The call for the AAUP sanction vote noted that it was "primarily directed against" the state board, which also oversees Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa, but anyone unfamiliar with the controversy surrounding the presidential search would need to do some digging to understand that nuance.

The Iowa case was hardly the only one in which the AAUP’s approach to boards arose as an issue. **It censured the University of Missouri at Columbia for the firing of Melissa A. Click, an assistant professor of communication who had aggressively confronted student journalists, even though the AAUP’s own investigation concluded that the Missouri Board of Curators had acted unilaterally in voting to dismiss her.** It opted to keep the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign under censure to keep its board under pressure to adopt faculty protections. In censuring the College of Saint Rose over faculty layoffs, the AAUP faulted the private college’s board for asserting too little oversight.

Although they were not the subject of votes at this year’s AAUP meeting, recent clashes between governing boards and faculty leaders at Sweet Briar College, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Wisconsin have helped reinforce the impression that the association and the faculties it represents are having trouble keeping boards in check.

**Questioning Fit**

Since the late 1930s, the AAUP’s policies have allowed for its censure of boards that bear all of the blame for violations of academic freedom or tenure. In such cases it includes next to the college’s name on its censure list a reference to the board as being the real target.
The AAUP’s practice of sanctioning institutions for violations of shared governance is much more recent, having been adopted in 1994. Its vote this month to sanction the University of Iowa stands out in terms of the amount of faculty opposition generated.

In an April letter, top officers of the University of Iowa’s Faculty Senate strongly discouraged the AAUP from taking such an action. They defended their university as having "an exemplary tradition of shared governance," and said Mr. Harreld had both expressed and demonstrated a commitment to shared governance since he took office. Their university, they argued, does not deserve a sanction previously reserved for colleges found to have pervasively denied faculty members "any meaningful role in academic governance."

Michael DeCesare, a professor of sociology at Merrimack College and chairman of the AAUP’s Committee on College and University Governance, says that panel discussed whether to call for the sanction of the Iowa Board of Regents alone but dropped the idea because "we all understood that we could not procedurally do that." Having ruled out the possibility of sanctioning the board, he said, "we were unanimous that the institution should be the target."

Christina Bohannan, a professor of law at the University of Iowa and immediate past president of its Faculty Senate, expresses impatience with the idea that the AAUP’s policies gave it no choice but to sanction her institution. "Frankly," she says, "I think it was on them to say the AAUP needs to change its policy on whom it sanctions, or they should have withheld sanction in this case."

"Now that we are on the sanction list," Ms. Bohannan says, "there is nothing we can do about it because we did not cause the problem in the first place."

Hans-Joerg Tiede, a senior program officer in the AAUP’s department of academic freedom, tenure, and governance, says that by sanctioning the University of Iowa,
rather than the Iowa Board of Regents, the AAUP leaves itself the option of issuing additional sanctions if the board violates shared governance at other institutions.

Mr. DeCesare says "it is a bit disingenuous to argue that the faculty and administration were entirely blameless" for what happened at the University of Iowa, because administrators and faculty members were on the presidential-search committee and met with Mr. Harreld as a candidate for the job. He argues that sanctioning the board instead of the university would not have "any effect whatsoever" because the board would lack any real incentive to get the sanction lifted.

For its part, the Iowa Board of Regents appears unfazed by the AAUP’s recent actions. In response to the sanction vote, Josh Lehman, a board spokesman, issued a statement saying the regents had run "a fair search for the president at the University of Iowa." He said the board disagrees with the AAUP’s characterization of the search process and its imposition of sanction, and "does not have any plans to discuss the sanction at a future meeting."

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**Missouri abortion restrictions threatened by Supreme Court ruling**

By Blythe Bernhard and Samantha Liss St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Legal experts say the Supreme Court’s decision on Monday to strike down restrictions on Texas abortion clinics will strengthen expected challenges to similar laws in Missouri.

Laws that require abortion clinics to meet standards for surgical centers and for their doctors to have hospital privileges are based on a flawed premise of protecting women’s health but actually limit their access to the procedure, the court ruled.
“The laws struck down in Texas and the ones here in Missouri do not make abortion any safer,” said Dr. David Eisenberg, medical director of Planned Parenthood in St. Louis.

“The women who come to me who have a pregnancy that they are not ready to carry or a pregnancy that is super desired, but they are given devastating information about a lethal anomaly, they don’t have any idea the political calculus that is being made on their backs in Jefferson City,” Eisenberg said.

In several states, including Missouri, which was the first state to enact both regulations, “the chances of those laws remaining in effect are pretty slim,” said Jessica Pieklo, a legal analyst for Rewire, a reproductive rights nonprofit group.

Still, Monday’s ruling dealt only with the Texas laws, so legal challenges will be necessary in other states and could take years to resolve. A spokeswoman for Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster said his office is reviewing the case.

“In terms of knocking down the dominoes state by state that have identical or nearly identical laws, that is not a thing that can happen yet,” Pieklo said.

Abortion opponents said they were disappointed in the ruling and will fight any challenge to the current laws.

“The Missouri Catholic Conference will continue its efforts to ensure that women in crisis pregnancies have access to agencies that offer alternatives to abortion,” the group said in a statement.

Abortions in Missouri have declined from a high of 19,482 in 1985 to 5,416 in 2013, the latest data available from the state health department. An additional 3,324 Missouri women sought abortions in 2013 in other states, including Kansas, Illinois and Tennessee, where the laws are less strict.
Planned Parenthood in St. Louis has the only abortion clinic in Missouri, down from 29 clinics statewide in 1982. The organization’s clinic in Columbia stopped providing medication-induced abortions last fall when the University of Missouri revoked the credentials of Dr. Colleen McNicholas. A hearing to review McNicholas’ privileges at MU is set for July 15.

Planned Parenthood plans to launch a fight to block the Missouri requirements on clinics and hospital privileges and resume providing abortions in Columbia, said Laura McQuade, CEO of the organization in Kansas and mid-Missouri.

“We are looking at all avenues to invalidate those two restrictions in the state of Missouri,” she said.

Tony Rothert, legal director for the ACLU of Missouri, said a federal court battle over admitting privileges in Columbia would be a likely path to challenge the state’s abortion restrictions.

“In Missouri, it will take costly litigation to strike down provisions, even those that are clearly unconstitutional,” Rothert said.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

What Happens When Your Research Is Featured on ‘Fox & Friends’

If you’ve read one thing about microaggressions on college campuses, it might just be this tip sheet.

The document, "Racial Microaggressions in Every Day Life," lists examples of microaggressions, or subtle slights of marginalized groups. For example: "America is
a melting pot" may be received by members of minority groups as code that they need to assimilate, the sheet says.

The tip sheet has appeared on the websites of the University of Missouri’s Diversity Office, the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, and the University of California system, which later removed it. That change came after widespread outrage on social media over what observers deemed political correctness run amok, and threats to free speech.

At the bottom of the sheet in small type is the name "D.W. Sue," among others. Derald Wing Sue is a psychology and education professor at Columbia University’s Teachers College, and the document draws heavily on the findings of a book he edited, Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact.

The popularity of the word "microaggression," a concept largely informed by Mr. Sue’s work, has coincided with calls for greater racial inclusivity on campuses — and competing attacks from conservative media outlets that allege students are being coddled by their colleges.

Those types of attacks have persisted more than a year after people began noticing the worksheet. Just this week, conservative blogs ripped the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for guidance on its Employee Forum website that said (among other things) telling a woman, "I love your shoes," constituted a microaggression. (The university has said the guidance does not represent official policy.)

Mr. Sue said he knew his research would catch on when the people he and his co-authors interviewed for the book said they needed a word to describe the slights they faced every day. But he did not expect it to catch on as quickly as it did. And he
wasn’t aware the research had been repurposed by universities as tip sheets until he started getting calls from radio talk shows.

He said he’s glad colleges have found the research useful, but he is cautious about the institutions that are taking it as an absolute. Mr. Sue said his goal had always been to educate people, not punish or shame them, if they engage in microaggressions.

"I was concerned that people who use these examples would take them out of context and use them as a punitive rather than an exemplary way," Mr. Sue said.

While the notoriety means the research is reaching more people, there are also downsides, said Christina M. Capodilupo, an adjunct professor at Teachers College and a co-author cited on the "Racial Microaggressions in Every Day Life" sheet.

Now that the research has made its way into popular culture, Ms. Capodilupo said, some people use the word to shut down conversations instead of reflecting on the situation.

"It was never meant to give a vernacular that then makes it OK to stop talking," Ms. Capodilupo said. "It was to ask people to be flexible in their thinking and to be open-minded to the concept that we don’t all walk through the world in the same shoes."

It’s worth remembering, Mr. Sue said, that microaggressions don’t always indicate that a person is racist. In fact, he said, it’s often the opposite. "People who engage in microaggressions are oftentimes well-intentioned, decent individuals who aren’t aware that they are engaging in an offensive way toward someone else," Mr. Sue said.

Ms. Capodilupo said that although the work she was involved in did not coin the phrase — the Harvard University professor Chester M. Pierce did, in the 1970s — she’s humbled by the trajectory the research has taken. The conversations the research
has sparked are important, she said, citing such examples as an MTV campaign to combat microaggressions and segments on Fox News Channel’s *Fox & Friends* that poke holes in the work.

Still, she said, when people get the research wrong, it’s an indicator that more work remains to be done.

Blogs and Twitter accounts have sprung up to chronicle and share examples of microaggressions. The fact that the term has become so ubiquitous, and even expanded in some instances beyond its technical definition, Ms. Capodilupo said, speaks to the influence of the work.

To combat lingering misunderstandings, Mr. Sue and Ms. Capodilupo are working on a book for a mainstream audience that expands on their original study.

**MISSOURIAN**

*Columbia's first Science on Tap talks lasers, bananas*

ALLISON COLLINS, 9 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Two scientists walk into a bar.

This isn't the beginning of a joke. It was the reality Tuesday when MU graduate students Nat Graham and Anahita Zara walked into the 9th Street Public House for the first Science on Tap.

"I'm passionate about developing science," Zara said, "and getting the information out there for people to learn."
The basic idea behind Science on Tap has been seen elsewhere: Scientists present research in a public place, eschewing a formal lecture for a more accessible, conversational exchange with anyone who is interested. Graham, who had the idea to bring it to Columbia, hopes the monthly event will give science, technology, engineering and mathematics students the opportunity to present research to a broader audience.

"You want the graduate students to get practice but the public to know what's going on," Graham said.

"Hopefully we learn a little bit, the public learns a little bit."

More than 50 people showed up Tuesday to hear Graham, who is studying biology, and Zara, who is studying chemistry, each talk for about 20 minutes. Two MU finance professors, Adam Yore and Michael O'Doherty, said they heard about the event on Facebook and were interested in the presentations.

They also weren't opposed to the $2 beer special.

At about 6:30 p.m. Graham grabbed a second beer from the bar before heading up to the microphone. Attendees clustered around tables, and the L-shaped bar stopped talking almost immediately. He stood up on a bench by the bar's projection screen and introduced Zara.

Zara presented her own research on proteins and light. With a team at MU, Zara used a laser to shine light on certain proteins so they could see the proteins' shadows in order to learn information about diseases like Alzheimer's and Huntington's. This process involved spectroscopy, where light is used to study things that are either incredibly small or very far away, like molecules or planets.

People nodded their heads throughout her presentation, their phones put away, beers in hand. Zara cracked jokes, used a few analogies and brought up several pictures when she explained her process.
Graham, who has been researching at MU for six years, presented on research he's found about "life-saving bananas."

He explained that some parts of the world suffer from a vitamin A deficiency, which can negatively affect vision and the body's ability to fight off disease. A possible solution to that problem is by genetically modifying bananas to include a vitamin A gene. Graham cited Uganda as a possible beneficiary because it's a country that suffers from a vitamin A deficiency, but it's also a place where people eat around two pounds of bananas each day.

"I believe lives would be saved if this was released," he said.

Graham explained that genetically modified foods have a negative connotation for some people, but he wished people realized the life-saving possibilities of these foods.

Future Science on Tap events will be held at 6:30 p.m. every fourth Tuesday of the month at 9th Street Public House. Presenters will be volunteers from a variety of departments at MU. The next one is July 26.