The politically spawned University of Missouri Review Commission held its first meeting last week. Despite first fears to the contrary, it shows signs of ignoring its suspect genesis.

As noted here earlier, the membership might have been appointed overtly by Republican political leaders, but it contains people who can be depended upon to do a credible job. A case in point is the chairwoman, Jeanne Sinquefield.

The name Sinquefield will evoke angst, but would-be critics are ignoring her track record of support for MU, and they don’t know the person. Jeanne Sinquefield has given more than $10 million for the MU music program, and I know her to be interested in outcomes more noticeable for quality than ideology. To be sure, her husband is Rex, the famous contributor to conservative candidates and causes, but I can attest Jeanne is her own person and will take seriously the role of the review commission. Rex will have nothing to do with her work.

Other members are similarly respectable. Former UM President Gary Forsee and MU Vice Chancellor for Research Robert Duncan are estimable members of my acquaintance whose intent is not to be questioned. At the initial meeting, Forsee said the commission’s work will not be credible if it is viewed as a partisan body.

Duncan is full of quaint beliefs such as, “It’s not who is right; it’s what is right,” not only spoken motto-like but practiced in his professional career. His pursuit of the right thing as he sees it is hindered only by bureaucratic sclerosis.

The point here is to encourage us all to give the commission a fair chance to show its stuff. In my estimation, it will not be ruined by excessive politicization. If it ends up with not much to show, it will
be because of its very limitations. How much can it really do between now and the end of the year, its announced deadline?

We won’t know until we begin to see some of its suggestions. Let us pray it will make some of substance even though they might be destined to disappear into that mysterious never-never land of institutional cogitation.

Come to think, it might be a blessing the review commission will have to make decisions without time for interminable discussion.

COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

New University of Missouri division pulls together student centers, civil rights offices

Generated from News Bureau Press Release: McDonald Announces Goals, Structure for Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity

Five student support centers and offices responsible for enforcing civil rights and disability access laws will be combined into a new division at the University of Missouri, the latest step by campus officials to address demands made during student protests this past fall.

The Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity will have a $1.5 million budget to establish itself and launch new initiatives, the university said in a news release.

The new division will bring the Gaines-Oldham Black Culture Center, the LGBTQ Resource Center, the Multicultural Center, the Women’s Center and the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center together with the Accessibility and ADA Education office and the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX.
“This reporting structure in the chancellor’s office is important to cementing the level of support for this work,” said Kevin McDonald, chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer for the UM System and interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity on the MU campus. “I would hope it elevates the level of visibility of the work they have been doing.”

The student support centers previously were assigned to the Department of Student Life. The civil rights office had been assigned to the provost’s office, and the accessibility office was part of the university’s Equity Office.

McDonald’s job at the system level and the reorganization are responses to campus protests this past fall by Concerned Student 1950. The student group demanded more black faculty, a plan to increase the retention rates for marginalized students and increased funding and personnel for the student support centers.

Along with the reorganization, the division will develop a framework that supports hiring more diverse faculty, makes minority students feel welcome, conducts research on diversity and supports efforts to meet diversity and inclusion goals in MU’s strategic plan.

“I remember even during the interview process reading those demands and recognizing that they fell into areas of the framework we identify,” McDonald said. “These are issues that are plaguing higher education across the nation.”

McDonald was hired June 1 as the system’s chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer.

That same month, he took over the campus role from Chuck Henson, who returned to the MU law school in April after a little more than five months in the interim position.

Before working for the university, McDonald was vice president and associate provost for diversity and inclusion at the Rochester Institute of Technology and vice president for equity and inclusion at Virginia Tech. His salary is $235,000 per year.

Henson worked with interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley and Provost Garnett Stokes to develop the reorganization and focus areas, McDonald said.

“They saw some wonderful opportunities and synergy from those units,” he said.

The new division and areas of emphasis have been carefully considered and should help give the offices and centers a more prominent role, said Stephanie Shonekan, faculty fellow and chairwoman of the Department of Black Studies.
“Of my own little piece of the pie, I am very optimistic and hopeful we are moving in the right direction,” she said.

The campus centers are important places on campus for students to receive support and feel a sense of community, Shonekan said.

“It is very important that they feel empowered to continue to do the good work they have done,” she said. “Restructuring gives them the gravitas and the resources they need.”

**Students learn at leadership academy**


*Generated from News Bureau Media Advisory: MU Hosting Summer Leadership Academy for Middle School Students*

Columbia, MO — More than 20 Mid-Missouri middle school students now have better leadership qualities thanks to a unique summer camp.

The Truman Youth Leadership Academy allows seventh, eighth and ninth graders to spend a week at summer camp at some unusual places. The students spent their first field trip at Columbia’s City Hall. They role-played as city council members to discuss government policies. Holts Summit’s Logan Huckstep will be a ninth grader at Jefferson City’s Helias Catholic High School. This is Huckstep’s third year attending The Truman Youth Leadership Academy.
Huckstep said, “I learn how to be a leader in my community and how I can start my own service projects with ideas that are new to me.”

Samaranjay Goyal will be an eighth grader at Columbia Independent School. Goyal takes his summer camp very seriously but says it’s also a lot of fun.

Goyal said, “I like working with my friends in my group. We have a fun time doing activities together. I guess that makes it really fun.”

The academy includes leadership training, service projects and other community engagement opportunities for students.

Camp Coordinator Harrison McLean said, “What we want our kids to take away, is taking the skills that we go over in our simulations and other activities and be able to apply them once they get out of camp.”

This year’s summer camp includes trips to The Missouri State Capitol, The Missouri Supreme Court and a visit to Columbia’s Flat Branch Park when students volunteer to clean up trash.

The University of Missouri Truman School of Public Affairs is hosting this year’s leadership youth academy.
BenFred: Rhoades gets the last laugh on Mizzou

By Ben Frederickson St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Jul 19, 2016

Was it a Freudian slip?

Somewhere between his teary-eyed reference to moving back to the state in which his grandfather was born and raised, his repeated references to his suddenly public Christian values and his first few calls of ‘Sic ’em’, Mack Rhoades stumbled.

“Before I speak for a moment on the incredible opportunity ahead of us here at Baylor, I want to thank the leadership of the University of Missouri, the incredibly dedicated staff, coaches and tremendous student athletes who make the state of Missouri so proud,” Rhoades said during his second introductory news conference in 16 months.

“Though my time in Columbia was short, the memories will last a laugh.”

Rhoades paused. He corrected.

“A lifetime.”

If you are buying what Mizzou’s former athletics director was selling during his first comments as Baylor AD during Monday’s Big 12 Conference media days events in Dallas, designed to promote the upcoming football season, you believe Baylor will come out just fine from the sexual assault scandal that has rocked the school. You believe Rhoades’ 14-month stint at Mizzou somehow left it in a better place. You believe
Rhoades can recruit desirable coaches because he married an attractive woman. You believe he believes in transparency.

Those familiar with Rhoades' time at MU know better. His stint there, so short the buyout Baylor will pay is $200,000 more than Rhoades made at Mizzou, reads like a list of an AD's worst nightmares: the football team’s boycott over racial tension and the departure of the men who hired Rhoades as part of the fallout from it, an NCAA investigation into the men’s basketball team, a Title IX investigation into a softball coach.

Rhoades can’t be blamed for all of these things. But he was a part of most of them. And the other stuff — such as the stalled fundraising projects and the donors and former players who resented his distance — falls squarely on his shoulders.

Whether Rhoades left for a better job can be debated ad nauseam, but one question asked Monday of Baylor interim president David Garland jumped out. A reporter wanted to know if Baylor could face sanctions from the NCAA or Big 12 based on the problems Rhoades was hired to fix.

"Now I'm worried, if that's what you think might happen," Garland answered.

It was hard to tell if he was joking. Rhoades sounded more defiant.

"Simply, I see opportunities and not challenges," Rhoades said.

Of course he can see the challenges. They’re as big as Texas. But they’re not as imposing when you had no hand in them. And that, more than anything, is what made Rhoades run.

"Why Baylor?" Rhoades asked. "Waco, Texas. We believe it’s a great place for our family to be, a wonderful community made up of very caring people, and yes, by the way, we love 'Fixer Upper'."
If that nod to the Waco-based home renovation show on HGTV sounds familiar, it is.

Rhoades referenced it during his introductory news conference at Mizzou.

“Has everybody watched the show on HGTV, the show ‘Fixer Upper’?” he asked then. “If you haven’t, great show. This is not a fixer upper, OK?

It is now.

**Breaking With History**

Should an HBCU founded by black Civil War veterans shutter its history department, against the recommendation of a faculty committee?

It’s hard to separate Lincoln University in Missouri from its history: after the Civil War, veterans of the 62nd and 65th U.S. Colored Infantries headed back to the Midwest from Texas and Louisiana, where they had served, to establish a school for African-Americans. The Lincoln Institute, named to honor the veterans' slain commander in chief, soon began offering college courses and became part of the black land-grant system. Decades later, in 1921, the Missouri Legislature passed a bill introduced by Walthall M. Moore, its first black member, renaming the institute as Lincoln University and establishing a Board of Curators.

**But now that board has separated Lincoln from its history -- specifically its history program. The body this week voted 4 to 2 in a special meeting to deactivate the program for three years.**

Some on campus fear the vote was really about condemning the major to a slow death. “We all feel like this is an ominous, dreadful thing we’re headed toward -- the kind of irrevocable change that will prove destructive to the kind of institution we’re supposed to be,” said Bryan Salmons, president of Lincoln’s Faculty Senate and chair of the joint department of English, foreign languages and journalism.
Professors say it remains unclear why history in particular was targeted -- especially at a historically black institution founded in 1866. Black-college history departments are not only known for teaching history, but for promoting a broader view of history than what was until recently taught at many predominantly white institutions.

So far, Salmons said, “every supporting rationale that’s been provided and almost every reason that’s been stated is palpably false.” For example, he said, the university has claimed the process was a product of shared governance.

Yet no faculty committee ever recommended the suspension or shuttering of the program, he said. "This happened at the executive level and any other way of representing it is misleading."

A university spokesperson said Tuesday that the program was cut due to low numbers of graduates over five years, “low regional and national career demand,” and low demand by incoming students.

This week’s vote followed a yearlong review of academic programs initiated ahead of an upcoming accreditation review by the Higher Learning Commission. While a committee of faculty members handpicked by Lincoln’s administration did assess programs, Salmons said, it didn’t recommend cutting history.

Michael Bardot, professor of history and chair of the department of history, political science and philosophy, confirmed that the faculty review committee did not recommend the shuttering of his program.

The history department was notified earlier this summer that it was up for a three-year deactivation. But the curators’ sudden meeting came as a surprise to faculty members, who thought the board would pick up curricular review matters again toward the fall. Instead, the university on Thursday posted a meeting agenda that listed the “elimination, deactivation, restructuring and maintenance of degree programs.”

In a news release announcing the outcome of that meeting, the university said the bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees in history are on hold for three years. “Deactivation of a program means students will not be allowed to enroll in the program, but additional time is needed to determine whether the program should be restructured or eliminated,” reads the release. “These curriculum changes come after a thorough review of 11 of the university’s degree programs. ... The decision was made based on recommendations of a committee.”
Lincoln said its accreditor requires institutions to review their degree offerings routinely. Additionally, the Missouri Department of Higher Education expects undergraduate programs to have at least 10 graduates annually and graduate programs to have at least five.

It’s true that history at Lincoln graduates fewer students than that; the program’s five-year annual average of graduating majors is 4.4. But Salmons said numerous other programs fail to graduate 10 majors per year. If the university applied that standard consistently, just 16 out of 39 programs would pass the test, Salmons said, based on a colleague’s calculation.

Lincoln’s total enrollment in fall 2015 was 2,944, including 123 graduate students. Kevin D. Rome, university president, said in a statement, “Our students deserve academic offerings that allow them to be competitive with their peers as they move from our campus into a career.”

Although eliminating or restructuring programs is a “difficult decision,” he continued, “we can better use the resources from those programs to strengthen those degrees with a higher demand from the student and global standpoint. ... We must make decisions like these as we look toward the future and the needs of the changing workforce.”

Said Sewell, Lincoln’s provost, said in a separate statement, “We have to make decisions that are in the best interest of our students, the taxpayers and the university as a whole. ... We developed a process that was not only thorough, but was inclusive of the faculty and administration. We wanted all voices to be heard.”

Two other degrees were eliminated at the board meeting, though none has caused the stir that history has: the associate of applied science in early childhood education, and the bachelor of music education and bachelor of science with an emphasis in sacred music.

The deans of the colleges with affected programs of study have developed a teach-out plan, according to Lincoln, based on a consideration of the “time and effort” of enrolled students.

Misty Young, a university spokeswoman, said via email that students will not be able to declare history as a major during the deactivation.
History courses still will be offered as general education requirements, and faculty members will be needed to teach them, she said. “When possible, attempts will be made to retool faculty.”

It appears the university plans to lay off some professors, however. Salmons said Sewell, the provost, said at the board meeting that the most tangible result of the move would be a $300,000 reduction in savings from faculty salaries. Bardot said he was not immediately aware of any layoffs.

Debra Greene, a professor of history, referred questions to Sewell and said she had “no other facts” beyond confirming the deactivation.

Chemistry also was on the chopping block, according to faculty accounts. That’s despite a recommendation by the faculty committee to provide it with more resources, including the hiring of new faculty. Yet it was removed from the suspension list at the end of June, after faculty backlash.

Salmons said the entire process has been unnerving but that there was something “especially repugnant about doing away with the history major at an HBCU. That would seem to be a third rail. Why would you go there? But they’re doing it anyway.” Bardot said Lincoln is an open-enrollment institution and “takes that mission very seriously. It’s been handed down to us by our [campus] founding fathers. I think it’s impossible to understand Lincoln University without understanding the context in which it was founded.” And that takes history.

Several prominent Missourians reached out to Lincoln’s curators, expressing similar sentiments, before their vote.

“I have a personal bias and a professional interest in preserving historical teaching and scholarship,” John Bullion, a professor of history at the University of Missouri at Columbia, wrote in an email to the board. “[But] I would like to emphasize not my professional concerns but my worries as a citizen of this country and of our state. It is no secret that the nation we all love for its promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all is now cruelly and tragically riven by divisions of race, religion and class.”

Bullion continued, “Historians have no easy cures for any of these. We do know, however, that looking for solutions will be seriously impeded, if not prevented, by absence of a knowledge of how these divisions began, how they have been perpetuated over time and how they have mutated into different forms.”
To create that knowledge “and to disseminate it among undergraduates beyond the level of survey courses is absolutely in the national interest,” he wrote. “To foreclose that possibility is -- let me be blunt -- watering the seeds of disunion, confrontation, hatred and violence. Thus I believe no public university should do away with history majors. That some would troubles me very much. Particularly troubling is this: that a distinguished historically black university would consider such a measure.”

Lynne M. Jackson, the great-great-granddaughter of Dred Scott and founder of the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation, also reached out to Lincoln, telling Salmons in an email that she was “greatly disheartened [and] unable to understand why this major is in jeopardy.” Noting that her father -- Scott’s great-grandson -- attended the now-defunct law school at Lincoln, Jackson said that “the rich history that the university itself has speaks to the importance of furthering the education of our histories.”

Elizabeth City State University, another historically black institution in North Carolina, planned to close its history department in 2013 after a state administrative office deemed it “low productive.” It eventually reconsidered, amid similar criticism. “Nothing is more fundamental than history to students' understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens of this diverse and still decidedly unequal democracy,” Carol Geary Schneider, then president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, said at the time.

The American Historical Association also criticized Elizabeth City State’s original plan. James Grossman, executive director of the organization, on Tuesday said he agreed with Rome, Lincoln’s president, that a college education should prepare students for a career. AHA has worked with employers through its Tuning Program and learned that they value skills learned by history majors, he said.

“A history major prepares some students for a specific job,” Grossman said, and “prepares all students for a career.”

Like other critics of Lincoln’s plan, Grossman said that an HBCU “ought to be especially aware of the centrality of history to the intellectual vitality of any institution.” Quoting the provost’s statement, he asked how “students, the taxpayers and the university as a whole' understand the role and identity of an institution that defines itself in part by its history if the institution doesn't think history is important?”

Young, Lincoln’s spokeswoman, said the university does have a special commitment to history based on its heritage, “but we owe it to our founders and our students to continue to rewrite our story, so that more history can be made.” It’s Lincoln’s goal to be “competitive in terms of the quality education we offer, while making our students competitive with alumni from other institutions as they enter and progress through
their careers,” she said, emphasizing that the program has not yet been eliminated -- just deactivated.