Improve Crisis Messaging Through Deeper Social Media Analysis

This story was the result of an MU News Bureau press release: http://munews.missouri.edu/news-releases/2016/0728-pr-officials-should-utilize-twitter-social-media-during-crisis-to-gauge-public-response/

Despite incredible advances in technology, the development of messaging during a crisis still feels like it is done on the fly. We look at our key audiences (such as customers, employees or the general public) and then try to put ourselves in their shoes. What do they want to hear from our company during this crisis? What do we surmise they are thinking about us? We put on our mind-reading helmets to attempt to sympathize and empathize because that’s how we were trained. Researchers at the University of Missouri just completed a study which suggests that there might be a better mousetrap. And, yes, it has to do with social media and how your reputation is determined online.

Doctoral students Doug Wilbur and Dani Myers analyzed Twitter responses to a crisis and found that seemingly unorganized or semi-organized groups may actually develop organized positions toward a company in crisis. I know that sounds a bit odd and far-too-academic for my usual blog post, but here comes the example that tells the tale.

Wilbur and Myers looked at the NFL’s concussion issue, and then gauged the impact of last year’s movie “Concussion” starring Will Smith. They knew the movie would generate reactions from multiple audiences, and they decided to measure and analyze those reactions on Twitter.

They found that different groups developed varying stances toward the movie, the NFL and the concussion issue; and these positions were developed organically, without prompting. For example, from the study:

- Health professionals seemed to develop a positive stance toward the movie and the health issues brought to the forefront, promoting the need for continued brain trauma research.
- Current and former athletes, as well as coaches, appeared to support that the movie raised awareness of concussions in sports.
- Other groups included lawyers discussing legal issues involving the NFL concussion crisis and a general lay public, which developed very negative opinions of the NFL and positive opinions of the movie.
According to Myers, we have been using social media to listen to our audiences for some time, but the researchers believed they could learn more through better analysis. The result is this concept that groups that are not organized in a traditional sense became organized around points of view.

How did they figure this out? A deeper dive into Twitter reaction looked at not only the content and sentiment of tweets but also analyzed those doing the tweeting. The researchers found patterns and similarities, as noted above, that can give guidance to the NFL, for example, on how to communicate with the healthcare industry vs. athletes or lawyers.

Typically, when we look at Twitter reaction, we review the number of responses and the overall sentiment. Here they went further and it appears that such a move is valuable.

The findings suggest to me, and this is broad stroke, that the NFL may have more of an ally in healthcare professionals than a “seat of our pants” analysis might have otherwise suggested.

I spoke with University of Missouri School of Journalism Professor Margaret Duffy about the big picture significance of the study, and while she was hesitant to give a simple takeaway, she did say that social media provides a fruitful area for researching and better understanding audiences. Among other areas of research, the journalism school focuses on how different technologies, philosophical standpoints and attitudes impact audiences in this evolving, converged media landscape. I was pleased to learn the university is taking a more scientific approach toward the oft-too-intangible field of PR.

Choosing the concussion issue and hooking it to the movie was a clever move by the researchers. Unfortunately, most of us don’t have the luxury of pinning a crisis to the opening weekend of a Hollywood feature. However, I think the lessons learned from this study can be applied to crisis situations which are more typical of public relations and marketing people.

Spending extra time analyzing audiences, drawing parallels and finding patterns in the sentiments could quickly pay off for any organization under fire, particularly if the communications aspect of the battle is being waged on social media.

Photography gives voice to teens participating in autism research

Generated by News Bureau press release: Photos Capture Challenges for Teens with Autism, Show Animals as Resource
As parents and autism researchers know well, the transition from school to adulthood can present significant challenges for teens who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Until recently, research aimed at identifying and addressing these challenges relied primarily on interviews with parents. Gathering firsthand accounts from teens remained difficult.

**Now, researchers at the University of Missouri’s Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders report their successful use of Photovoice, a creative research method that allows study participants to use photography to identify and share their experiences.**

"While we have long known that youth with ASD face challenges transitioning to adulthood, most research has focused only on perspectives of parents or caretakers," says study co-author Nancy Cheak-Zamora. "In order to truly understand the perspective of young people with ASD, who struggle with limited communication and fears, we needed to think outside the box to help them share their stories. Giving them cameras so they could tell their stories through images allowed us to determine what these young adults thought and felt."

Based on this method, the researchers gave cameras to 11 study participants, ages 16 to 25, and asked them to capture the experience of “growing up” – both what they enjoyed and what challenged them. The researchers used the photos to spark a dialogue with each participant. They then analyzed and categorized the teen’s responses to identify themes of importance.

For instance, many of the teenagers took photos that helped them describe the stress around learning new skills, taking on new responsibilities, socializing and the prospect of leaving school and living more independently as an adult. Another emerging theme involved feelings of sadness and loneliness.

On the “what helps me” side, many of the young participants took pictures of animals and talked about how animals were important companions that helped relieve loneliness.
"Youth with ASD struggle with isolation and socializing with peers and family members;" Dr. Cheak-Zamora says. "However, they continually try to put themselves out there and be more social and try to make friends. These were evident themes through the photographs taken."

The project’s findings will advance research designed to foster health and independence in young adults who have autism, she adds.


In addition to Dr. Cheak-Zamora, study co-authors included Michelle Teti, Anna Maurer-Batjer and Donna Halloran, all of the University of Missouri.

Mouse microbes may make scientific studies harder to replicate

By Kelly Servick  Aug. 16, 2016, 10:15 AM

In the first experiment, Laura McCabe’s lab seemed to hit a home run. The physiologist and her team at Michigan State University (MSU) in East Lansing were testing how a certain drug affects bone density, and they found that treated lab mice lost bone compared with controls. “I was thinking, ‘Hey, great! Let’s repeat it one more time to be certain,’” McCabe recalls.
They ordered a seemingly identical batch of mice—same strain, same vendor—and kept them under the same conditions: same type of cage, same bedding, same room. This time, however, treated mice gained bone density. “Maybe one was a fluke,” McCabe thought. They did a third run—and saw no effect at all. She was baffled.

She knew that signals from the gut can affect how bone forms and gets reabsorbed, so her team took fecal samples from control mice in each of the three experiments and analyzed their gut microbes. They found something unexpected: Each group had a different microbial makeup to begin with.

McCabe has no idea where the mice acquired their distinct gut bacteria—from the containers that ferried them from the vendor? From a technician’s clothing? But how the drug affected her subjects clearly depended on what already lived inside them.

It’s easy to see how such effects could make it difficult to replicate experiments, a concern that has roiled fields from psycho logy to cancer. A few years ago, two pharmaceutical companies reported that they could not replicate the vast majority of academic findings in preclinical experiments. Pressure to publish and a bias against negative results account for some replication problems. But other failures to replicate likely have “practical explanations: different animal strains, different lab environments or subtle changes in protocol,” as Francis Collins and Lawrence Tabak, director and principal deputy director, respectively, of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland, wrote in Nature in 2014. In other words, sometimes a study doesn’t hold up because the replicator is unknowingly performing a slightly different experiment.

Increasingly, experimenters are questioning the potential research impact of the microbiome—a term often used to refer to commensal gut bacteria, but which also includes resident viruses, fungi, protozoa, and single-celled archaea species. Rarely even discussed a few years ago, this potential source of variability attracts growing attention at lab animal care conferences, says MSU’s attending veterinarian, Claire Hankenson. “We didn’t know to look for it before,” she says.

Yet a mouse’s microbes can be maddeningly hard to pin down. The species living in a mouse are always changing, impossible to fully standardize, and for the most part unmeasured. Adding to the challenge, researchers are realizing that it may be a bad idea to simply wipe out lab mice’s microbial guests, some of which are critical for health and immune responses and help
make the animals into robust, meaningful research subjects. How, many researchers wonder, can this variable ever be controlled?

**An invisible variable**

Mice are stirring on a quiet summer afternoon at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. Roused from their daytime sleep by human visitors, they fill their room at the Veterinary Service Center with the faint rustle of shredded paper. Their clear, shoebox-sized cages, lining ceiling-high racks arranged like library shelves, represent investigators’ best efforts to control every variable that might skew the outcome of studies. These little worlds are meticulously standardized: equal volumes of sterile bedding, steady cycles of light and dark, even a consistent flow of temperature-controlled air. Every cage is attached to two pressurized vents, as if these mice occupied the cabins of their own personal airplanes.

But are these environments as identical as they look? Researchers surprised by inconsistent results wonder what hidden variables may lurk in these cages. “I think what this [reproducibility] conversation is doing is expanding the variables for investigators to think about,” says J.R. Haywood, MSU’s assistant vice president of regulatory affairs.

And mice’s resident microbes are an emerging concern. The zoo of organisms on and inside each animal can shift for all kinds of reasons, including a change in the formulation of mouse chow, or in the sources of grain or protein within a brand. Cagemates share microbes, thanks to their penchant for eating one another’s feces. Some researchers suspect that even stress, such as an early separation from the mother, can also change a mouse’s microbial ecosystem.

An explosion of recent studies in both animals and people suggests that resident microbes can influence susceptibility to diseases from HIV to asthma, predispose to obesity across generations, and tinker with how the body responds to drugs. Tying such effects to experimental results is challenging, but some hints have cropped up. In one early example, more than a decade ago, a research team at Pfizer detected an odd change in rats’ urine: a sudden shift in the relative concentrations of two compounds produced when the body breaks down food. The change could muddy toxicology studies that rely on urine metabolites to measure how a drug gets broken down in the body. Researchers traced the unusual rat colony to a single room at the vendor’s facility, and they restored the original urine composition in a few weeks by cohousing the rats with animals from other rooms. Although back then no one was sequencing rodent microbiomes, the Pfizer team suspected that microbes were responsible.
In a more recent example, last year scientists at the University of Missouri (MU), Columbia, working with a mouse model of multiple sclerosis accidentally reversed the symptoms by adding a common antibiotic to the animals' water. They restored symptoms simply by cohousing their mice with a microbially richer strain, suggesting that the traits they had come to rely on in their research hinged on a delicate balance of mouse microbes.

Veterinary pathologists Craig Franklin and Aaron Ericsson, also at MU Columbia, are trying to account for such effects by measuring and manipulating those microbes. “Even 5 years ago, most people considered doing microbiota analysis untouchable, unless that was the expertise in their lab,” Franklin says. But today, more labs are sequencing fecal samples in search of bacterial genes or paying others to do so, he says. His own team offers such analysis for $125 a sample through the NIH-funded Mutant Mouse Resource and Research Center.


**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

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**Editorial: Steady, there**

Sterk to the rescue

By Henry J. Waters III

Tuesday, August 16, 2016 at 2:00 pm

In the photo on our front sports page Friday, interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley was smiling like a Cheshire cat. He was seated next to the man he had just hired to become his next athletic director: Jim Sterk, recently of San Diego State.

Foley said Sterk embodies “everything we were looking for in an athletic director, someone who had a winning record, who has taken good programs to greatness, a person who equally values success in the classroom and mentoring young athletes.”
Who knew Superman was in the job market?

Nearby on the same page, Tribune Sports Editor Joe Walljasper gave us his usual informed take on Sterk’s appointment. In a word, he said Sterk promises “stability.”

Stability is not all but certainly is essential. The contrast between the 17-year tenure of former AD Mike Alden and the 15-month stint served by next-in-line Mack Rhoades was stark, augmented by the unfortunate turmoil stemming from campus protests and top university leadership resignations.

Recovery from these unfortunate events does require a reinstatement of stability. We can hope Sterk will be a major factor, but even more important is the emerging presence of Chancellor Foley himself.

I mention his name without the familiar “interim” predecessor because for my money he is well on his way to full-time, permanent status. He openly says he wants the job, and everything he is doing tells me he deserves it.

Of course, at this moment the two are engaged in a love fest, but after his meeting with Foley, Sterk said, “I could go to war with that guy.” As they seek to put MU athletics back on firm ground, Foley and Sterk might have to endure a few warlike engagements. From what we are learning at this stage, they have the right stuff to prevail.

Look at it this way: Sterk & Co. have nowhere to go but up. Taking over a major athletic program currently mired behind the pack in arguably the strongest athletic conference in the nation provides a unique opportunity for a good AD, age 60, who can credibly say he wants to end his career here yet has time to make something of it.

The stars seem aligned. Let’s hope Sterk can make the most of it.

People You Should Know: Kevin McDonald, Chief Diversity Officer, UM System

Title and company/organization:

Chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, University of Missouri System, and interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity, MU.
**Age:**

44.

**Job description:**

Provide collaborative leadership to the diversity and inclusion efforts at the UM System and MU.

**Years lived in Columbia/mid-Missouri:**

Two months.

**Original hometown:**

Cleveland, Ohio.

**Education:**

B.S. in psychology, Andrews University; J.D., The Ohio State University; Ed.D. in higher education, University of Rochester.

**Professional background:**

Disability rights investigator, Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, disability rights section; dispute administrator, Network Solutions; campus compliance officer, University of Maryland–College Park; assistant director of compliance and conflict resolution, Johns Hopkins University; director of equal opportunity and affirmative action programs, Virginia Tech; vice president for equity and inclusion, Virginia Tech; vice president and associate provost for diversity and inclusion, Rochester Institute of Technology.

**A Columbia businessperson I admire and why:**

I haven’t been here long enough to identify someone, but I look forward to meeting more members of the business community.

**A favorite recent project:**

Founding the M.O.C.H.A. (Men of Color, Honor, and Ambition) Initiative at RIT and seeing its transformative impact on the lives of young undergraduate men.

**If I weren’t doing this for a living, I would:**

Probably be working for the state or federal government, because I’ve always had a fondness for government entities.
**Why I’m passionate about my job:**

I’m driven by a desire to make a difference in the lives of others, and I’m passionate about the importance of diversity and inclusion in an organization’s quest for excellence. I just want to work collaboratively to help organizations desiring to achieve inclusive excellence.

**Why I’m passionate about my company:**

There is supportive leadership and a collective will among students, faculty, staff, administrators, and local community members to work collaboratively to move diversity and inclusion efforts forward. I feel very fortunate to be a part of this community, and I look forward to working with others in an effort to set the system, and all of the campuses that comprise it, apart nationally as having the best practices in the diversity and inclusion arena.

**What people should know about this profession:**

That it is steeped in research, and that this research, when examined disaggregated, tells important stories that inform the work of diversity professionals in higher education and in other professions.

**The next challenge facing my industry:**

Believing in and operating on the fact that diversity is more than just increasing the composition of an organization; it also entails leveraging those differences in a variety of functioning areas to impact the organization’s bottom line.

**My next professional goal:**

I don’t know — I think I have enough keeping me busy with these two roles that I don’t have much time to think about what my next professional goal will be. Suffice it to say that I believe it will be in higher education, because I have grown to love the field.

**Biggest lesson learned in business:**

Your degrees and past professional experiences may help you get through a professional door, but your ability to forge, nurture, and maintain strong professional relationships will keep you there and allow you to ascend in your career.

**How you would like to impact the Columbia community:**

I look forward to working collaboratively to positively impact the K–12 pipeline to higher education and initiatives focused on the younger generation.

**Greatest strength:**

My interpersonal communication skills.
Greatest weakness:
Taking on too much and not finding enough of a work–life balance.

What I do for fun:
I love working out and eating out with my family and friends.

Family:
I’m married to Kim McDonald, and we have three wonderful children: Rodney Osborne Jr., 24, Kayla McDonald, 16, and Kesslyn McDonald, 14.

Favorite place in Columbia:
I enjoy Main Squeeze and Babbo’s as favorite places to eat, and I enjoy Wilson’s Fitness as a favorite place to work out. I haven’t discovered my favorite trail as of yet. There are a few to choose from, so the jury is still out.

Accomplishment I’m most proud of:
Working with my wonderful partner to raise three amazingly gifted, respectful, and driven children. Most people don’t know that: I’m a vegan who enjoys heated yoga.

After the Fire
Boone County is bracing for the economic fallout from a tumultuous year at MU — but how bad will it really be?

Just west of Jesse Hall’s front staircase, facing the Columns, is a skinny trapezoidal stone monument dedicated to the building’s namesake, former university president Richard Henry Jesse. It’s about 10 feet high and 5 feet wide at its base. It attracts good sunlight during the daytime. MU installed the monument in 1939 — a 100th birthday present to itself.

Jesse, previously a Latin professor at Tulane, became president in 1891, one year before Academic Hall (which was, at that point, essentially the entire university) burned
down on a snowy night in December, famously leaving only the six columns salvageable. MU enrolled a little over 1,000 students at the time; around 5,000 people lived in Columbia. With the campus ruined, state officials considered moving the university to Sedalia, which had nearly three times Columbia’s population and was growing. Alarmed by the potential loss of one-fifth of their population and a significant fraction of their city’s jobs, Columbians raised $50,000 — about $1.3 million today — to rebuild the school in Boone County.

As president, Jesse led the campaign, and his work in rebuilding and expanding the school earned him the nickname “the Father of the Modern University.” His monument bears a quote, on its west face: “The University itself — its learning, its skill, its zeal, its enthusiasm — remains untouched, and its work will go on without interruption.” The attribution reads, “Richard Henry Jesse, 1892, After the Fire.”

At the end of the 2015-2016 school year, Boone County and MU found themselves in a better position than in 1892, but still not a very good one. Racially charged protests and the resulting backlash (and, seemingly, the backlash to the backlash) hastened an enrollment falloff that the school had been avoiding for years, even when comparable colleges began struggling to recruit new students. Throughout the spring semester, bad news came endlessly: investigations, threats to cut off state appropriations, meager application numbers, and on and on. At a forum in early March, Interim Chancellor Hank Foley, who assumed his job in November amid the protests, announced that the school would institute a hiring freeze and mandatory five percent budget cuts for all departments in response to an expected $34 million budget shortfall.

The partnership between MU and Columbia generally benefits both, which is why the city so steadfastly fought to keep the university in 1892; the college provides jobs for residents and human capital (put another way: skill, zeal, and enthusiasm) for employers, who get access to a constantly refreshing talent pool to grow their businesses. But with the university wounded, what’s at stake for the community?

**To the Drawing Board**

Throughout the spring, two MU officials— Vice Provost for Economic Development Steve Wyatt and Vice Chancellor of Operations Gary Ward — were reporting updated enrollment projections to the board of Regional Economic Development Inc., or REDI, on which Wyatt and Ward are ex officio members.

In recent years, under the direction of then-vice chancellor for research and graduate studies Hank Foley, MU turned to business development as means of creating revenue, which strengthened the school’s bonds with entities like REDI. Columbia’s broader
entrepreneurship community refocused on collaboration as well, incorporating MU-adjacent groups like the Missouri Innovation Center with private and public enterprises like REDI and campus resources at MU and Columbia College. So, when Wyatt and Ward reported on enrollment to the REDI board, it was as a business partner in need of help.

“I think the business community has really rallied behind the university,” says REDI director Stacey Button. “And we’re working proactively to overcome anticipated shortfalls and potential drop-offs.”

I met Button and REDI's vice president, Bernie Andrews, to ask how the business community might soften the impact of MU’s budget trouble. Both reiterated REDI’s staunch support of the school, but they also made a point to talk about other opportunities for growth: at the blue-collar level with manufacturers like 3M, for example, or at Columbia College, which has retooled its recruiting process and administrative structure to attract more four-year students and expand their programs.

“I think this community is resource-rich, and it’s a matter of coordinating effort between all of us,” Button says. “There is a very intentional effort to coordinate all of the resources together.”

Having a united support system in Columbia has counterbalanced the fury that some state legislators aimed at MU after the protests in November. Button recalled a trip she made to Jefferson City, accompanied by representatives from the city, county, chamber of commerce, and public school system, to meet with legislators. Originally, the trip’s three goals were to generate support for Columbia’s airport terminal project, transportation services, and projects at the MU Research Reactor. The fourth topic on the minds of state officials, Button says, was MU funding, and the informal diplomacy group found itself in the role of appropriations lobbyist.

“Again, I’ve seen this business community rally,” Button says. “No one is shying away from [MU]. We’re wanting to come together to ensure positive outcomes.”

**Picking Data**

In 2012, I came to MU from Denver as one of the out-of-state-tuition payers that bolstered the school’s finances in a time of sinking college enrollment (nationally, college attendance has declined every year since 2010, according to the Hechinger Report). The day after the hiring freeze was announced, in early March, when the threat of appropriation cuts still seemed very real, a professor of mine paused a class to say, “It’s much better to be a senior at Mizzou right now than a freshman.” In May, I graduated.
MU, by nature of being a public research university, was in a precarious situation before the protests even started. A study from the American Academy of Arts & Sciences reported states cut support to the median public research university by 26 percent between 2008 and 2012, evidence that appropriations fell steeply during the recession. Another study, from College Board, found that appropriations were 14 percent lower in the 2014-2015 school year than in the 2004-2005 year.

Colleges raised tuition to compensate, but MU was restrained by Senate Bill 389, which ties tuition to the consumer price index, thus limiting the school’s ability to raise prices. That bill, when passed in 2007, was coupled with a promise for more state support for higher education. State funding later fell off (by 26 percent between 2010 and 2015). The bill stayed in place.

In response, MU boosted out-of-state recruiting and opened up admissions, bringing in high-paying out-of-state students and increasing enrollment numbers, which peaked this past fall at a little over 35,000. But protests, and the enrollment drop that followed, again made state appropriations an immediate concern.

Since higher education funding began to fall nationwide, colleges have tried to argue their case through economic impact reports — research papers, almost always done by university researchers, about how reliable an investment in higher education can be. MU released one in 2005, early in the downward funding trend, and The Missouri 100, a system-appointed group of university advocates, commissioned another this past spring, pleading the school’s case to Jefferson City. The report emphasizes the UM System’s positive impact on lifetime earnings for Missourians (and the corresponding bump in income tax) and the role of university-based research and development in growing businesses. The report’s key findings include that Missouri’s economy grows roughly one-fourth faster thanks to the UM System’s R&D, that every one dollar reduced in appropriations to the UM system reduces the state’s real GDP by $38.48, and that an appropriations cut directed at the Columbia campus would be even worse. Likewise, every one dollar spent on appropriations would increase the state’s tax revenue by $1.46.

It’s easy to cast doubt on these types of economic impact reports, and many have. In a report for Duke University’s Urban Economics site, Michael Rebuck writes: “many of these economic impact studies exaggerate or incorrectly state the impact of their universities . . . A university’s goal of persuasion leads one to doubt the concrete accuracy of their reports.” Another report, from Vanderbilt University, was dedicated to troubleshooting the “methodological approaches and pitfalls common to studies of the economic impact of colleges and universities.” In that report, researchers point to inconsistency among economic impact reports as evidence of methodological flaws. In a survey of 138 impact reports, job impact multipliers (how many total jobs are created by one university job) ranged from 1.03 to 8.44. (In the Missouri 100 report, researchers
did not use multipliers, focusing instead on other avenues of economic impact, like R&D.)

The impact that colleges have on their states — and, even more so, on their cities — is hard to quantify. For example, college towns generally rate extremely high in income inequality because students don’t generate much income, and some of them live, eat, and shop on campus, further complicating their relationship to their city’s economy. An unknown number of those students make essentially nothing but spend a lot, with financial help from parents or loans. And students also impact their city’s economy through the type of investments they attract, like student housing. These variables make it hard to establish a control group to study a university’s economic impact, so while there are undoubtedly positive economic effects present — like increasing human capital, raising lifetime earnings, and promoting growth through R&D — it’s hard to get a clear picture of how universities really impact their cities.

Which, of course, makes Columbia’s current problem harder.

**Fighting through the Pain**

Karen Miller was elected Southern District Boone County Commissioner in 1992. Her current term will be her last; in 2015, Miller announced that she wouldn’t be running for re-election. She’s spent part of her last year in office advocating for MU, locally and statewide (she was on the Jefferson City trip that Button mentioned).

Miller is also the vice president of the County Commissioners Association of Missouri; the group held their annual board dinner at Grand Cru, in Columbia. The UM System’s interim president, Mike Middleton, was there, along with MU Provost Garnett Stokes. Miller addressed the crowd.

“Of that board — and there were 20-some of us there — only one did not have a tie to the University of Missouri,” she remembers. “I had each one of them get up, introduce themselves, and tell if they had a tie to the University of Missouri, if they either graduated, they have kids who graduated, they have grandkids in school, their parents went there — they had a tie somehow to the University of Missouri. I tried to remind them that the impact was statewide. And when you think of the drivers of the University as a whole, and the income that they produce in this state for all of us, we can’t be badmouthing our number one impact.”

There are 18,193 UM employees living in Boone County, about 17 percent of the county’s total labor force. To Miller, the number speaks to the economic impact of MU, but also to the personal, emotional attachment that the community has to the school. To
see national coverage of racially fraught protests at MU, then to see the fallout dragged over half a year, was shocking.

“I was out of state [during the protests], and every news channel, every paper, Wall Street Journal, USA Today — every time I turned around, we were on the front page,” Miller says. “It was embarrassing. And that’s what people were feeling. I think they were embarrassed because they honestly didn’t believe we were that backwards yet. I consider it backwards. I thought we were past that in-your-face — you know, there are bigots, and there are people who are prejudiced still, but I thought civility carried the day in our community. And I was very disappointed that there were things that were not very civil happening in our university.”

Miller says that, in the long term, the past year will be helpful for MU. The school’s diversity policy will be straightened out, and its finances will be trimmed to size and made more efficient. “I always look at lemons like, ‘Where’s the lemonade here? How can we turn this into a win?’” Miller says.

In the short term, the situation is painful. A five percent budget cut means position cuts and layoffs — at a REDI board meeting, shortly after Foley announced the budget shortfall, Ward said there might be 600 positions affected. At the time of this writing, in early July, after the new fiscal year has started for MU, there have been 38 staff layoffs.

The operations department, which Ward leads, was the first MU department to announce major cuts. Through various means, including assisted retirement, unfilled vacancies, voluntary layoffs, and involuntary layoffs, Ward eliminated 50 jobs. The cuts included a reduction in MU’s landscaping and trash removal services; the Columbia Daily Tribune’s article about the announcement led with, “The University of Missouri will be shaggier and dirtier and faculty will be responsible for taking their own trash to dumpsters under the plan. . .”

Ward was mildly ruffled by the media’s portrayal of the job cuts — he says there were only three involuntary layoffs — but he doesn’t dwell, nor does he apologize for acting quickly. “We’re operations. That’s what we do,” Ward says. “We have, I think, an obligation to our employees. We ask a lot of our employees, but we also treat our employees with respect, and one way we can do that is if I know something, I want them to know. It’s not necessarily that we have to shelter them from bad news — they just want to know the truth.”

Last fall, Ward was already expecting a budget tightening, though not as severe as the one that occurred, so the department was able to make some preparations before the mandatory five percent cut. But even then, some job loss was inevitable, and not just within MU. Suppose, given the wide range of possible job multipliers listed in university economic impact reports, that we conservatively say that every one job lost at MU
means 1.5 jobs lost in Boone County. That would mean the 38 layoffs MU made by July will translate to 57 lost jobs in the community.

Budget cuts also have far reaching effects for MU’s (and, therefore, Columbia’s) business development efforts. Reducing expenses for the Office of Economic Development likely means easing back efforts at business growth. “That money is not going to be there,” Wyatt tells me. He sets up a hypothetical math problem: if you have $100,000, and somebody takes $5,000 away, then you just lost the ability to do whatever you were going to do with your $5,000.

Also lost are the indirect impacts of that $5,000, whatever money that $5,000 business development investment might have made for the community. The budget cuts leave some programs hamstrung — groups like the Small Business and Technology Development Centers, for example, will now have a harder time securing matching dollars from the university for potential grants. All resources must be directed to simply maintaining operations.

“The University Extension exists to explore and make things better, not just maintain the status quo,” says Steve Devlin, extension program director and leader of the SBTDC. Devlin is continuing to push his programs to grow in any way possible, but it’ll be harder now, for a lot of reasons. Devlin says, “Hiring freezes don’t work well when you have people retiring and people leaving for other opportunities.”

Brand Damage

“The time for bashing this institution, on our part locally, is over,” David Shorr says. I met him on a late afternoon at Lutz’s BBQ — his suggestion. Shorr is a REDI board member, a position he earned through longtime involvement in the public arena: he was director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and he’s served in a variety of roles, both private and public, since then, currently as an attorney with Lathrop & Gage and a member of various boards. (Though not affiliated with this magazine, Shorr co-hosts the “Columbia Business Times Sunday Morning Roundtable” on KFRU.)

“The brand has been hurt,” he says. “I would love to see the data on shirt sales and things like that, which we don’t hear anything about from the athletic department. . . . In southeast Missouri, I bet they’re down. And I bet Memphis t-shirt sales are way up.”

Shorr, and others, say that the brand damage that resulted from the protests and following events accelerated MU’s enrollment problem, which is perhaps why officials like Button and Miller are eager to voice support for the university. The quicker MU can
repair its image, the quicker they’ll be able to normalize finances. As Ward puts it, the school must “learn to ring our own bell.”

MU is the biggest business in town, even bigger when combined with MU Health Care. And even while celebrating growth in other areas, the community seems to recognize the prime importance of the university.

As part of Columbia College’s strategic realignment, the school has been adding programs and increasing four-year, on-campus enrollment, all while continuing to maintain a strong online presence and develop their athletic program as a recruiting tool. Kevin Palmer, vice president of enrollment and marketing, has overseen much of that effort, which came about via a larger effort to make the college’s administration more business-like. Even that has been affected by MU, which Palmer cited as an example of potential systemic problems in higher education.

“The challenges that they have at Mizzou are challenges that we’re seeing throughout our culture,” Palmer says. “We address them, and we look at them, as any serious person would, and that’s that there’s always room to improve.

“We love MU,” he added. “They’re the flagship university in our state. And we love having another cat in town.”

Shorr admits that he, at times, has offered less-than-constructive criticism of the university over the last year, but since Foley’s budget forum, he’s recognized the need for a united front. Now, MU has to buckle down.

**Left Standing**

The economic link between MU and Boone County is very real, even if that link is difficult to quantify and harder to predict. It’s been a painful year for the school and for its community. It’s hard to say exactly how painful the coming years will be. Wyatt compares this year’s enrollment drop to watching a python swallow a pig: once it’s swallowed, you watch it move all the way through, without getting any smaller. That’s to say, the problem won’t be solved in a year, and it probably won’t be solved in four.

Miller, now preparing to exit office, where she’s served as an advocate for MU and the community since 1992, is thinking long-term. “Opportunity comes out of crises in people’s lives,” she says.

Foley, who didn’t respond to interview requests for this story, seems to be thinking long-term as well. In his letter to the university, announcing the budget shortfall, he wrote, “While these budget challenges will affect our ability to deliver teaching, research and
service to Missourians in the short term, we also know that we have survived other stressors of this kind before.”

Boone County’s relationship with MU has always been long-term; that was a promise made after the fire.

Op Ed: Integration is neither perfect nor easy

By WILLIAM E. ROBERTSON

Tuesday, August 16, 2016 at 2:00 pm

When people engage with each other, it is never simple, equal and just.

Individuals, organizations and communities do not address integration in a vacuum. They are involved with many issues at the same time. Integration is among many issues that are addressed in a complex context. Consequently, discrimination might not be overt, and it could be unconscious to a degree. It might also be systemic and thus more difficult.

As a remedy to false integration, replacement of key personnel will frequently be attempted. Real integration requires a genuine sharing of decision-making and resources. Dominant and powerful people are generally unwilling to do that. Too few of the subjugated appear to be willing to take the responsibility of managing the resources and decision-making even when they are given the opportunity, fearing they, too, might fail.

More effort has to be invested in the integration process if we want it to work. It generally requires uncomfortable change. The University of Missouri and the Mid-Missouri public and private businesses illustrate this dilemma. Rarely will they make the required effort. Token gestures of all types will be tried, and denial will be the excuse of the day.

Rationalizations will be offered, such as progress toward integration has been so successful that only minimal effort is required. Diagnosing and owning the problem is hard. The greater the perceived difference among those engaged in the integration process, the greater the difficulty and, thus, the greater the effort required.

The differences and issues can be racial, religious, gender-related, income-based or any other excuse to exclude people, including age and disability.
The strength of the integration process or the lack of integration becomes apparent when a crisis occurs. Then issues of blame, value, equality and justice are made clearer.

It becomes obvious that perpetration of discrimination, inclusion and exclusion is based upon these perceived relationships. The relationships and their value are generally determined by proximity to the perpetrators, familial kinship, geography, culture, religion, economic and social status as well as other contrived reasons to differentiate among people. If problems of integration are to be addressed, it will generally be necessary for those who believe they have been injured to indicate it and prove their injury.

Most important, they must be ready and able to develop and/or participate in the remedy of the injury and enhancement of the integration process. This requires research, analysis, strategy development and accountability measures. This is where the universities could be most helpful. Integration done right ain’t easy.

**William E. Robertson is a professor emeritus at the University of Missouri.**

**MISSOURIAN**

**STEVE SPELLMAN: Corporate incentives to create jobs are short-sighted**

**STEVE SPELLMAN, 1 hr ago**

The Boone County Commission this week is set to vote on yet another corporate welfare scheme.

Dana Light Axle Products is pressuring Regional Economic Development Incorporated (REDI) to give the company a tax break package, or else it will not add to their operation here. In fact, Dana has openly declared that other communities are already offering it attractive corporate welfare proposals, so if Boone County doesn’t up the ante, Dana would likely move the existing 89 workers from Columbia, too.

Officials of local taxing entities are celebrating this opportunity to approve a Chapter 100 bond policy for this company. Columbia Mayor Brian Treece was quoted as encouraging REDI to “convey a sense of urgency.” Columbia Board of Education member Darin Preis thinks it’s a great project for Columbia, calling it “a slam dunk.”
The usual argument in favor of these schemes is the company shopping for tax breaks, a practice commonly called “rent seeking,” says it would not expand or stay here without especially lower tax treatment.

By cherry-picking economic winners, they unnaturally determine what kind of new businesses are attracted here. It is sure safe to assume that if you subsidize something, you tend to get more of it. However, these new jobs are only what is seen or what we are led to see.

The flip side, which is unseen, is that politicians do no such favors for the likes of small time local restaurants, auto repair shops, plumbers and electricians. Unsung core members of the local economy such as these folks therefore become relative economic losers to varying degrees.

After these deals are minted, politicians and the beneficiary companies have a grandiose announcement and ribbon cutting. They pat themselves on the back and claim accolades from the community for “creating jobs” for us all.

But the promises often don’t work out after the limelight has faded.

The IBM deal here in Columbia touted the creation of many new jobs, but over the years never lived up to those promises. Granted, IBM only received state incentives for jobs it actually did create, but the city bought a building for IBM upfront — simply corporate welfare in another stealthy form.

Ironically, IBM couldn’t find enough available local employees (which they felt political pressure to do), as not enough were around with the required technical skills for the jobs.

At the same time, other existing local IT companies were all of a sudden finding it difficult to hire enough programmers, too.

So the technicians IBM hired actually poached a limited labor pool away from existing local employers. This proves that specific jobs the politicians helped “create” were not even the kind that local people needed, after all.
Now a recent AP story reports that U.S. manufacturers are finding it difficult to replace their retiring workers, as younger workers don’t have the required skill set.

So who is to say these new 135 new jobs Dana is promising will actually materialize and if these specific jobs are the ones community members actually need? Likewise, what politicians now touting this Dana deal will volunteer to take responsibility if other local manufacturers (with less political clout) later find it more difficult to find enough workers at their shops?

The public sector is also at a disadvantage negotiating these deals at all. As MU professor of agricultural and applied economics Judith Stallman was quoted as confirming: “The firm always has more information than the government. It takes a lot of due diligence to figure out what the real plans are.”

By their nature, private companies cannot and should not disclose to public sector officials the details of their strategic plans. However, the tax incentive tool box that public officials have available is a matter of public record.

Companies commonly hire executives to know those rules inside and out, in order to exploit this system and pit municipalities around the country against each other in a corrupting race to the bottom.

Now, that said, the REDI folks here in our community are some pretty smart individuals. We have every reason to be assured they are at least above average in their vetting. Maybe the Dana jobs will work out and be a benefit to the community in some way or another. Maybe limited government folks should rejoice as at least somebody’s taxes are being lowered. But that’s not the point.

This is bad policy in general. By succumbing to companies brazen enough to threaten municipalities, it simply encourages more companies to do the same to us in the future.

We should be friendly toward any businesses to hire as many employees as they see fit, as long as they operate legally, conform to basic zoning regulations and pay their taxes like everybody else does.
Do we even want such dubious corporate citizens here who play back-room games and threaten our governments? Say no to special deals for such companies.

University of Missouri using more alternative fuels
A University of Missouri official says the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the school's power plant has decreased 43 percent since the 2008 fiscal year.

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, MO. - A University of Missouri official says the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the school's power plant has decreased 43 percent since the 2008 fiscal year.

A decreasing reliance on coal due to stricter environmental regulations has led to the plant's use of alternative fuels, The Columbia Missourian (http://bit.ly/2bvXLRc ) reports.

Assistant Director of Energy Management Ken Davis says the power plant has decreased the amount of coal needed to power, heat and cool the campus. Since 2008, the school went from using 182,000 tons of coal to around 48,000 tons.

The university says the power plant expects to further reduce coal consumption to about 30,000 tons.

The school is also making use of a mix of alternative fuels. Wood residues and natural gas make up 63 percent of fuel burned in boilers at the plant on Providence Road.
Incorporation of automated light and cooling systems in buildings on the university’s campus has also helped the school decrease its energy consumption 20 percent per square foot since 1990.

In May, the U.S. Energy Administration reported a 15 percent decline in coal-fired generating capacity since 2011. Officials attribute that response to an increase in environmental regulations and lower natural gas prices.

MU paid search firm $75,000 for Sterk hire

By Dave Matter St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 19 hrs ago

COLUMBIA, MO. • As usual with high-profile hires, the University of Missouri used a national search firm to help land athletics director Jim Sterk. Mizzou agreed to pay College Sports Associates a base fee of $75,000 to assist with the hiring process, according to the contract obtained by the Post-Dispatch through an open records request. MU will also reimburse CSA for any expenses related to travel, lodging, meals, materials, printing and other reasonable out-of-pocket business expenses.

Last week, Mizzou and Sterk agreed to a seven-year contract with a guaranteed salary of $700,000. He spent the last six years as AD at San Diego State University. He plans to take over at Mizzou on Aug. 22, replacing Mack Rhoades, who left for the AD position at Baylor University.

While some have scoffed at Mizzou’s five-figure price tags for past searches that landed basketball coach Kim Anderson, a former MU player and assistant who worked 90 minutes away at University of Central Missouri, and football coach Barry Odom, the team’s defensive coordinator at the time, Mizzou’s latest search might not have been possible without Turner’s firm. This was Missouri interim chancellor Hank Foley’s first time hiring someone to run MU athletics, and without a background in college sports, Foley sought out CSA, run by Todd Turner, a former athletics director at several Division I schools, including the University of
Washington, where he was AD the same time Sterk was AD at rival Washington State University.

MU agreed to pay Turner’s company $38,000 upon the execution of the agreement, which was dated Aug. 1. That total included a one-time $500 office support fee. MU agreed to pay the remaining $37,500 when it hired an AD, which happened last Monday. CSA will bill MU at the end of each month for pre-approved expenses. The contract estimates that off-site interviews of six to eight candidates generally costs between $20,000 and $25,000 in expenses. Travel costs and other expenses for the search consultant, Turner in this case, should range between $2,500 and $5,000, the contract states.

This isn’t the first time Mizzou used Turner’s company for a major hire. Former AD Mike Alden used CSA when he hired men’s basketball coach Kim Anderson in 2014. That search cost MU $42,500, plus expenses.

Last year, Mizzou paid Korn Ferry International an initial retainer fee of $75,000 when it hired Rhoades. The cost of that search eclipsed $200,000. Korn Ferry would have conducted a second search at no cost had Rhoades left Mizzou within a year of his start date. He left after 14 months.

Last fall, Missouri paid College Sports Solutions $84,720.60 to conduct the search for a football coach, who turned out to be Odom.

This time around, Mizzou’s warranty on the contract is a year longer: If MU fires Sterk for any reason other than disability or Sterk leaves MU for any reason other than death or disability within two years from his start date, CSA will reopen the search and replace Sterk for no additional fee, as long as the new search starts within three months of his termination date.

According to the contract, Turner began the process with an initial campus visit to meet with Foley and other key constituent groups to define a vision for the position and write a position profile for the job. From there, Turner developed a “candidate’s notebook” to address key questions for final candidates. The contract defines the consultant’s most important tasks as
such: broaden a pool of qualified candidates, serve as the initial point of contact and protect the integrity of the search through confidentiality and discretion. CSA’s contract also recognizes the importance of holding an open and inclusive search for a wide range of candidates, including ethnic minorities and women. CSA states in the contract that it has “aggressively south after and included minorities and women in each candidate pool” in every search it’s conducted. Foley declined to identify any other candidates who were considered for the job. CSA also conducted extensive background reviews, including criminal checks, driving record reviews, verification of educational degrees and a credit report. CSA was also available to assist with the terms of employment and serve as a liaison between the final candidate and MU in developing his contract.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

How 3 College Presidents Are Trying to Move Their Campuses Past Racial Tensions

During the last academic year, dozens of college presidents faced a similar dilemma. Minority students were occupying administrative offices, marching across campuses, and demanding immediate action to combat what they saw as racial injustices. The atmosphere was tense, and campus leaders had little time to decide how to react.

At least four of them — including two top administrators at the University of Missouri — eventually resigned. Some pledged to address activists’ demands, while a handful refused to respond directly. Others incorporated the concerns into continuing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

The Chronicle checked in with three presidents who have witnessed turmoil on their campuses. What progress have they made in calming racial tensions and keeping their promises to bring about change? Here’s what they had to say.

Towson University
During November’s nationwide wave of campus activism, Towson students began a sit-in at the president’s office and said they wouldn’t leave until Timothy J.L. Chandler, the interim leader, promised to respond to their demands. Mr. Chandler and several other senior administrators then worked extensively with the protesters to revise the language and make the requests more achievable.

Eight hours later, Mr. Chandler signed off on the revised document, pledging to resign if he did not meet all of the stated goals. Two months later Kim E. Schatzel, formerly provost at Eastern Michigan University, became Towson's permanent leader, and Mr. Chandler returned to the provost's office. He acknowledged in an interview with The Chronicle that he may have put his successor in a tough spot.

Did he? "He absolutely didn’t," Ms. Schatzel said, with a laugh. "If you look at the requests that were signed off on, they were very reasonable." They included greater faculty diversity and cultural-competency training.

Now, Ms. Schatzel said, "we’re on track to be able to meet the deadlines that we had talked about." Shortly after she arrived on campus, she met with the students who had organized the sit-in, as well as leaders of the student government and the Black Student Union. She also announced that Towson would hire its first chief diversity officer.

But she quickly faced a racially charged controversy: In April a student allegedly made an offensive remark to a black employee in a campus cafe. Students responded with a stream of tweets using the hashtag #TheTowsonIKnow, and the Black Student Union called on administrators to improve their response to incidents motivated by bias and hate.

Ms. Schatzel said her administration plans to do just that. A team of students, faculty, and staff is revamping the process for bias-incident reporting.
"If you report something, when are we going to acknowledge it? Are you going to get an email back? How quickly will we be able to assess the situation? What type of feedback are you going to receive?" Ms. Schatzel said, explaining some of the questions the group is tackling.

The president said she often turns to social media to keep up with the campus conversation. She wakes up at 5 a.m. most days and almost immediately checks Twitter, Instagram, and Yik Yak to see what students are talking about.

"If I go meet with students, even if I say, ‘I want you to talk to me,’ I’m still the president — I’m going to get a filtered response," she said. "Sometimes, if I look at tweets and the like, I might ask questions that I would never have known to ask."

**Oberlin College**

In January Marvin Krislov, Oberlin’s president, drew attention for refusing to respond directly to students’ 14-page list of demands. The demands included granting immediate tenure to three professors, firing nine faculty and staff members, and renaming four campus buildings. The students threatened "a full and forceful response" if every demand wasn’t met.

The document, Mr. Krislov wrote, "explicitly rejects the notion of collaborative engagement" and "contains personal attacks on a number of faculty and staff members who are dedicated and valued members of this community." He told *The Chronicle* at the time that he didn’t see any room for negotiation.

But in the months since, Mr. Krislov has softened his approach. He met several times with the students who wrote the demands during the spring semester. "All of our students come to campus believing that they can change the world, and that campuses are a great way to create the kind of ideal world that they want," he said.
The activists whittled down their lengthy list to five priorities, including a website of resources for low-income students and better data collection on minority students’ academic success. Plans for taking action on those issues were incorporated into the college’s strategic plan, which was completed in March.

"We need to listen to and work with students — and faculty and staff — on some of these concerns in ways that we may not have done previously," Mr. Krislov said.

In the spring, Oberlin debuted a new series of courses and campus programming called "Think, Create, Engage," with "The Framing of Race" selected as the inaugural theme. A description on the college’s website characterizes the theme as "the historical, political, economic, cultural, and social processes that have produced white supremacy and the violent enslavement, genocide, and oppression of diverse groups of marginalized peoples."

This fall, Mr. Krislov said, officials will start making recommendations for carrying out the college’s new plan, which includes a commitment to further diversifying students, faculty, and staff. Professors in the College of Arts and Sciences will soon complete a workshop on incorporating inclusive strategies into their teaching and their interactions with students and colleagues. As Oberlin expands its population of low-income and first-generation students, Mr. Krislov said he also hopes to offer more assistance to those who can't go home and can't afford meals during fall and spring breaks, when the dorms and dining halls are closed.

Much of the positive response to Mr. Krislov’s January statement came from Oberlin alumni, who applauded the president for taking a stand against what they saw as unreasonable requests. But Mr. Krislov said he’s tried to emphasize to alumni, particularly those from three or four decades ago, that they might not fully understand the concerns about racism and prejudice that current students are raising.
For instance, older alumni didn’t attend college in an era of debate over police shootings of African-American men. "Sometimes," Mr. Krislov said, "there can be this disconnect."

University of Washington

While most of the prominent protests over race took place last fall, students at the University of Washington staged demonstrations in the spring. They said university leaders were doing too much talking and weren’t moving quickly enough on promises to improve the racial climate.

In April about 200 protesters took over an event on microaggressions and issued seven demands to the administration, including a new community-policing model for campus law enforcement. Hundreds of students also walked out of classes in May and interrupted a meeting of the university’s Board of Regents with a demand that the institution divest from private-prison companies.

A similar protest about a year earlier had inspired Ana Mari Cauce, Washington’s president, to create a "race and equity initiative." When she announced the plan, Ms. Cauce gave an emotional speech describing her personal experiences of racism and homophobia. (She identifies as Cuban-American and lesbian.)

During the first year of the race-and-equity effort, "there has been a lot of dialogue and talk," Ms. Cauce said in an interview, responding to the students’ criticism. Cross-cultural understanding, she said, is an essential part of a more inclusive campus. More than a thousand students, faculty, and staff have participated in structured conversations about diversity throughout the past year, according to Ms. Cauce.

Many of today’s students believe bias and prejudice against minority communities should be things of the past, Ms. Cauce said. "It’s great that those are the
"expectations," she said. "But I think the realities do fall short." And she understands that some activists are frustrated by the pace of change: "Frankly, it’s not fast enough for me either."

As part of the race-and-equity plan, Washington has started offering leadership workshops for administrators, professors, and students. The workshops, which cover implicit bias and other diversity topics, have proved popular, Ms. Cauce said. A campus-climate survey is in the works. And the university has increased its budget for recruiting and retaining faculty members from diverse backgrounds to $1 million across its three campuses.

Officials are also working with campus law-enforcement officials to review data on police stops and look for any racial patterns, and to expand bias training for officers.

The president has met with the protesters a couple of times in recent months. "We never stopped talking to the students who were demonstrating," Ms. Cauce said, noting with a touch of pride that the protests were all peaceful. "And they never stopped talking to us."

Still, she stressed that this particular group of activists shouldn’t be the sole agenda-setters for how the campus moves forward on racial-justice issues. Some minority students at Washington don’t agree with the protesters’ demands or tactics, she said, and many other student leaders are just as committed to promoting diversity and inclusion. Her goal is bringing those voices to the same table.

"We tend to focus on those stories where you’ve got a group of students with their fists in the air — which certainly is fine," she said. "Protest has its place in our country and in this movement. But there also is a larger group of students that are really looking for common ground."
Missouri grad assistants worry about social media monitoring

Watch story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=f5ea665c-53c1-4646-8c49-f4c7c398e52a