Trump-Clinton debate, round 3: Just how low can it go?

By Joe Garofoli

October 19, 2016 Updated: October 19, 2016 7:00am

Generated from News Bureau press release: After Debates, Clinton’s Increased Positive Scores by College-Aged Students is Historic

Wednesday night’s presidential debate will be the first since Donald Trump’s tweeted pronouncement that “the shackles have been taken off” his campaign. That means anyone hoping for a confrontation less nasty than the last one is likely to be disappointed.

Being unrelievedly nasty is about the only strategy left for the Republican nominee to win the election, analysts said. His goal in blasting out unfounded accusations over the past few days about “rigged” elections and calls for drug-testing Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton is simple: He wants to “demobilize” Clinton’s voters.

Lagging behind Clinton in national surveys and most swing state polls with less than three weeks to Election Day, Trump’s last best path to victory is to try to win ugly. That means keep railing that the U.S. election system is rigged in Clinton’s favor. And accusing Clinton of meeting “in secret with international banks to plot the destruction of U.S. sovereignty in order to enrich these global financial powers, her special interest friends, and her donors,” as he did at a Florida rally last week.

Or telling African Americans, as he did last week, that because they “have no jobs, they have horrible education, they have no safety or security,” they might as well vote for him. “What the hell do you have to lose?”

Demobilization is key for Trump because a Clinton victory effort is dependent on turning out high numbers of her core supporters.

“He’s hoping that young voters and African Americans and others just throw up their hands and not participate,” said Mitchell McKinney, director of the Political Communication Institute at the University of Missouri. “His strategy is to double-and triple-down on these attacks and produce 90 minutes of scorched earth. He hopes it has a demobilizing effect on people who just say, ‘The heck with it.’”
Fox News host Chris Wallace will moderate the 90-minute debate in Las Vegas. The scheduled topics are debt and entitlements, immigration, the economy, the Supreme Court, foreign “hot spots” and fitness to be president.

Here’s what to look for:

**What will Trump do to reach out to new voters?** Chances are, nothing. It’s way too late for a new, more temperate Trump to emerge.

“I don't expect Trump to rein in his performance. If anything, he may be even more reckless now that his back is against the wall,” said Alan Schroeder, author of “Presidential Debates: Risky Business on the Campaign Trail.”

“More reckless” will be a tough standard for Trump to meet. In the second debate, Trump said that if he were president, Clinton would be in jail for her use of a private email server when she was secretary of state. He appeared at a press event minutes before the debate began with three women who say Bill Clinton sexually assaulted them, then gave them seats close to the stage. And he said Hillary Clinton “has tremendous hate in her heart.”

All that was after Trump dismissed as “locker room” talk his comments on a now-infamous videotape from 2005 in which he lewdly explained how he used his celebrity status to make unwanted sexual advances on women.

Ordinarily, someone in Trump’s electoral pickle would be looking to expand his base of support, Schroeder said, “and debates are a place where that can be done. But he does not seem capable of rising to the occasion. His first two debates were entirely about playing to the base, which hardly helps him add new voters to the mix.”

**How will Clinton react to the expected onslaught?** McKinney said the Democratic nominee’s best strategy is to “maintain your composure and keep your cool no matter what he throws at you. Then try to raise a few issues that you think are important and just try to survive this. The burden is not on her — the burden is on him to change the dynamics of this race.”

**Does Clinton have a response to the flood of hacked Democratic Party emails and investigation into her own email problems?** Analysts said Clinton’s toughest questions concerning the WikiLeaks disclosure of emails from her campaign manager, John Podesta, will be ones that cut to the core of voter concerns about her honesty and the integrity of the Democrats’ primary process.

In particular, she needs to better address assertions revealed in the leaked documents that she has “both a public and a private position” on controversial issues, analysts said.

She also needs to have a strong answer to the question of why newly released FBI documents concerning the investigation of her use of a private email server show that a State Department staffer proposed that email the FBI considering labeling as “secret” remain unclassified.

Analysts say that from Trump’s standpoint, the problem with the WikiLeaks trove and continuing email probe revelations is that it might be too late in the cycle to move significant numbers of voters.
Plus, McKinney said, “a lot of the material is very inside baseball. I don’t know who it moves that doesn’t already feel that way about Clinton.”

**What is the long-term effect of talking about “rigged” elections?** For the past few days on the campaign trail, Trump has said the electoral system is rigged in Clinton’s favor.

“They even want to try to rig the election at the polling booths,” Trump said during a rally in Green Bay, Wis. “So many cities are corrupt and voter fraud is very, very common.”

It is not. Of the roughly 1 billion votes cast between 2000-14, there were 31 known cases of voter fraud, according to a Loyola Law School study.

The system would be difficult to rig because each state has its own election system. And if there were a conspiracy, Trump’s fellow Republicans would have to be in on it, since GOP governors control 30 states.

Unless moderator Wallace corrects these notions, analysts said, it will be up to Clinton to rebut them immediately.

“Long term, it is very dangerous that you have people who really believe that,” said Alison Howard, chair of the political science department at Dominican University in San Rafael. “If you don’t correct it, people will continue to believe it.”

**Will the racial subtext of voter fraud be raised?** It will be interesting to see if Trump repeats a version of what his top surrogate, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, told CNN recently — “to tell me that I think the election in Philadelphia and Chicago is going to be fair, I would have to be a moron to say that.”

Mentioning cities with high percentages of African American voters is “speaking in racial codes,” said James Taylor, a professor of political science at the University of San Francisco, where he is director of African American studies. The intention, Taylor said, is to energize Trump’s base.


“Is there proof of any voter fraud? Absolutely not. That’s not the point,” Taylor said. “The point is to delegitimize the outcome of the election by saying that black people are stealing the election from Donald Trump and help him save face as he faces a landslide.”

**Whom does the format favor?** This debate will look similar to the first one. The candidates will be standing behind podiums — which is good news for Trump, who was criticized for walking around the stage behind Clinton while she spoke during the second, town hall debate. Wallace will be the sole moderator — and despite working at Trump-friendly Fox News, he is known as a tough questioner, no matter whom he’s interviewing.

Wallace has been clear that he doesn’t plan on fact-checking the candidates in real time. He says that’s up to the candidates, which could lead to a lot of the same cacophony that we’ve seen in the first two debates.
3rd presidential debate last chance for fireworks

BY TOM FONTAINE | Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2016, 10:09 p.m.

Generated from News Bureau press release: After Debates, Clinton’s Increased Positive Scores by College-Aged Students is Historic

Presidential debate scholar Mitchell McKinney has seen enough.

“I can't wait for this thing to be over,” the University of Missouri professor said of this year’s series of presidential debates.

It won't be long, professor.

Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump square off Wednesday night in the third and final debate. The 90-minute debate will air at 9 p.m. from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

The first two debates were marked by increasing and unprecedented vitriol, mostly coming from Trump, McKinney said.

“The level of negativity we've seen has been off the charts. This will be the last chance for Trump to really go after Clinton, but I don't know how he could increase his attacks or be any more conflictual,” McKinney said.

McKinney doesn't think “tripling-down” on attack mode will benefit Trump.

“If it's just more of the same, I don't think that will help. The burden is on Trump to try to change the dynamic. He has to do something that might change people's thinking about him,” McKinney said.

RealClearPolitics' average of polling in the race shows Clinton leading Trump by 6.9 percentage points. Trump was within 2 points in several polls released just before the first debate three weeks ago.

While the second debate followed a town-hall format with the candidates fielding questions from moderators and audience members, Wednesday's debate will be broken into six, 15-minute segments on topics including debt and entitlements, immigration, the economy, the Supreme Court, foreign hot spots and the candidates' fitness to be president, according to the Commission on Presidential Debates. Chris Wallace of Fox News will be the moderator.

Moon Area High School government and politics teacher Chris D'Eramo said the debates have presented educational challenges. He teaches a ninth-grade U.S. history class and AP history to 12th-graders.

The debates have been required viewing for the 12th-graders, but he has elected not to make it required viewing for the ninth-graders partly because of the subject matter, including discussion of
tape in which Trump bragged about groping women. The AP classes have engaged in their own debates about what they saw — including discussion about whether the candidates should even bother having the third debate.

“These kids want to learn, and they want to be able to talk about policy, so they're a little disheartened about what they've seen. They want more substance,” D'Eramo said. “It is unfortunate some of the language being used, especially for some of these kids who are experiencing this for the first time. But it's the political climate that we're in right now. To shield them from all of this does them a disservice.”

Presidential debates change voter opinion more than usual in this election

Generated from News Bureau press release: After Debates, Clinton’s Increased Positive Scores by College-Aged Students is Historic

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=14f9d6d1-79d6-49c5-86bd-95de66c68af1

COLUMBIA – Millions of people will be watching the third and final presidential debate Wednesday night. Usually, such debates don’t change people’s vote preference much, according to MU professor Ben Warner. But he said this election has been different so far.

Warner is an expert on presidential debates and his department has been studying them since 2000. His data shows a 10 point shift towards Hillary Clinton after the first debate and a five point shift after the second debate.

“That’s significantly more movements in vote preference than we have seen in any of the previous cycles,” Warner said.
The data shows that, coming into the debates, both candidates have been extraordinarily unpopular. Clinton has used the debates to improve the way people see her, whereas Donald Trump on the other hand hasn’t been able to change perceptions of him, according to Warner’s data.

Both candidates will get another change to convince more voters Wednesday night. Andrew Pryor is one voter who, so far, hasn’t been impressed with either candidate.

“They didn’t talk about policies, which is the most important thing people want to hear. They just talk about what they think of each other,” Pryor said. “Judging by the last debate, I’m sure tonight will not go much better.”

Warner there is much more to the presidential debates than just deciding who to vote for.

“A lot of times, we discuss if people are really going to change their minds when watching a debate, when what’s really happening is an important civic function,” Warner said.

He points out that the debates play an important role in order to make our democracy function by getting mass participation in the election.

“The debates give people a lot of information about the candidates and more importantly they increase people’s confidence that they have knowledge to participate in the election,” Warner said. “So after watching a debate, people are a lot more likely to actually vote.”

---

Gap in Kids' Food Program Can Put Families at Risk

Generated from News Bureau press release: [Age Limit for Federal Food Assistance Program is Increasing Food Insecurity](#)

Chantelle DosRemedios was pregnant with her second child when she and her husband both lost their jobs in Rhode Island. Like millions of others, she depended on a federal program designed to aid in early childhood development to keep her children fed.
Moms and kids who qualify can participate in a federal program called Women, Infants and Children, or WIC. The program provides nutritious food packages and other benefits to some eight million moms and young kids nationwide.

“At that time, if I didn't have (WIC), it would mean my kids not having enough during the day to eat,” she says. “It was such a great help when you have nothing coming in until you can get back on your feet again.”

Once kids enrolled in WIC turn five, though, they are no longer eligible for the extra food. According to new research, that puts entire families at risk for hunger.

When DosRemedios’ first son turned five, he still hadn’t started kindergarten, so he couldn’t take advantage of free school meals that some schools supply. That donut hole -- the gap between aging out of WIC and starting school -- hits a lot of families, DosRemedios says.

“I believe that would help a lot of parents because it is an additional cost for a whole year providing extra food until they can get into a full-day kindergarten or a full-day school,” she says.

Colleen Heflin, who specializes in food policy as a professor at the University of Missouri, recently published new research looking at kids who fall into this gap. She found that losing a food package for one child can plunge the whole family into an unstable situation without enough food; a family of five may now have to split four meals.

“Our research showed that there's a spike in food insecurity right around this age point, when children lose eligibility for WIC,” she says.

And, she says, a lack of nutritious food can have lasting effects on the kids.

“There are physical effects, mental health effects (and) cognitive effects,” she says. “We know there are differences in family functioning. And (there are) even somewhat obvious things like families are less likely to eat meals together, which we know has impacts on all sorts of positive pro-social behaviors.”

When children fall into this gap, families sometimes enroll in SNAP, or food stamps. Others shop at the food bank. So Heflin has an idea: Extend WIC eligibility to age 6.

“And this would, for most of the children in our survey, close that gap entirely,” she says.

Zoe Nueberger,a senior policy analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, says that’s the goal.

“Participating in WIC is associated with not only better diets, which you would expect, but also healthier births, lower infant mortality and lasting effects,” Nueberger says.
Indeed, that’s why several advocacy groups, including the National WIC Association and Food Research and Action Center, have been pushing for a U.S. Senate bill that reauthorizes the WIC program and adds to it by extending eligibility to age six, as well as extending infant certification for up to two years. The bill passed the Senate Agriculture Committee in January 2016, but has yet to get a vote in the full Senate.

COLUMBIA, MO. • Missouri took another big step toward funding its new football facility with Wednesday's announcement of an $8 million anonymous donation. This comes on the heels of last month's $10 million donation from the Kansas City Sports Trust that launched the school's fundraising efforts for a new facility planned for the south end of Memorial Stadium. The two gifts are among the five largest donations toward athletics in the school's history.

Missouri has raised $67 million for the project, the school said Wednesday. Athletics director Jim Sterk has put an approximate price tag of $75 million on the project.

“We are so grateful for such a transformational gift,” Sterk said. “We’re very excited to continue this process and keep momentum going. Our next steps include meeting with architects to determine all of the details of the project and then our goal will be to present our final plan with the funding model to our Board of Curators for their approval in February.”

The board is scheduled to meet Feb. 9-10 in Columbia.

“This is such an exciting time for our program, and I’m so impressed with our donors and the support they’re giving for this project,” Mizzou coach Barry Odom said. "I can’t say enough just how thankful we are for gifts like this. We’re going to create a first-class facility, something that our fans will be proud of, and something that will have a huge impact for years to come for our student-athletes."
Earlier this month, Sterk presented the board with initial artist renderings of the facility, which will be attached to the stadium's south side and include coaches' offices, a team weight room, locker room and training room.

The new building will have views that look into Memorial Stadium, while the project could include additional premium seating options in the south end zone and replace current rows of seats. The project is not expected to enhance the stadium's capacity.

“I think we need to be unique,” Sterk said last month. “That’s what I’ve challenged the architects and what the donors want to see, something that works for us and fits into our stadium that looks good and can help enhance the game day but also every day (usage).”

The second phase of the facility plan will be a new 100-yard indoor football practice facility with an estimated cost of $24 million. The new indoor will be built in addition to the current indoor facility and is preliminarily planned for the practice fields along Stadium Boulevard.

Similar stories ran statewide.

Possible Bright Flight cuts upset students

COLUMBIA - MU students are angry and disappointed after receiving an email from the MU Financial Aid Office Wednesday.

The MU Financial Aid Office said in an email the Bright Flight recipients will receive $300 less than their scheduled amount on the spring disbursement date. MU sent the email after the Missouri Department of Higher Education notified the office it does not currently have the funds.
Liz Coleman, the director of communications for MDHE, said it is applying for a supplemental appropriation in order to get the rest of the money. She said MDHE is about $275 short for each student.

"We paid students $1,500 in a Bright Flight Award for the fall semester, and they suggested that we pay $1,200 in the spring, and if the supplemental is approved, the students would receive another $300 to take them to their full spring amount," said Nick Prewett, director of student financial aid at MU.

Students said not receiving the money promised could have a huge effect.

"I know a girl who works three jobs and gets four hours of sleep a night and is basically constantly sick with something because she works herself so hard," said Mary Mertes, a Bright Flight recipient. "For her to lose that kind of money with such short notice before the next semester would do a lot of damage to her, and there's a lot of students in Missouri in that situation, who are doing everything in their power to get a college degree."

"I think if, you know, students that work that hard in high school to get that Bright Flight scholarship, it's a disappointment to them to get less than they were originally promised when they've been receiving the same amount for all these years," said Abby Hoffman, another Bright Flight recipient.

Mertes said she wants to know what happened to the money that was promised or if it was never there to begin with.

"This is money that the state said that they had, that the state said that they would give us, and with two months notice, they're telling us that suddenly the money isn't there," Mertes said.

Coleman said the money has to be reduced because there are more recipients of the award this year than before, but some students do not consider this a good excuse.

"I think that saying that the reason that they've come up short is because they have more students than in previous years is a very weak excuse. There's a reason that they send out an estimated amount the Bright Flight money will be and then adjust it in June and in August based off the number of students that they actually have enrolling in it," Mertes said. "If their funding problem is truly a problem with the number of students that they have, that's something that should have been anticipated and funded when they set the number of students that were receiving the scholarship back in August. It should not be becoming a problem now in November."

According to Prewett, MU has the highest number of Bright Flight recipients.

"At the University of Missouri, we have 1,916 students that receive the Bright Flight Award, and so this is impacting them for about $574,000," Prewett said.

He also said the office was being proactive in sending out the email and wanted to keep students informed rather than waiting to hear if the supplemental appropriation is approved.
Curators at the University of Missouri are close to choosing the next president for the four-campus system.

They have scheduled a specially called closed-door meeting for 12:30 p.m. Friday in Columbia, and a person close to the presidential selection process told The Star that a preferred candidate for system president could be selected this week. But it could be another week before a contract agreement is reached and the board is ready to announce its choice.

Two weeks ago, the 16-member university Presidential Search Committee, made up of curators, alumni, two faculty members, a staff member and two students, held two days of closed-door meetings at the Kansas City Airport Marriott hotel but had little to say about how close they were to a final selection.

According to the university’s timeline for the selection, curators were expected to receive a final recommendation on a candidate from the search committee the week of Oct. 2.

When the committee was formed last February, curators projected the university would complete the selection process by late November or early December.

Since the process began, no information has been released about the professional background of the candidates who’ve been interviewed or how many of them were being considered.

That hasn’t stopped speculation. Reports have surfaced that Ohio University President Roderick J. McDavis may be a finalist for the UM position. McDavis, the university’s first black president, has held his current position since 2004. But he has announced he is leaving the university and that his last day leading the Athens campus would be June 30.

Ohio University spokeswoman Carly Glick said that “we have no comment” when asked whether McDavis is a finalist for the Missouri presidency.

The new president will replace Tim Wolfe, who resigned last November under mounting pressure from faculty and students who staged a series of protests over racial issues on the Columbia campus. The protests focused a national spotlight on MU and set off similar racially motivated protests on campuses across the country.
Michael Middleton has been serving as interim president of the UM System since November. He came out of retirement to take the post until a new president could be found.

Spokesman: University of Missouri curators unlikely to complete presidential search this week

The University of Missouri Board of Curators will meet in closed session Friday with the selection of a new system president pending.

The presidential search, which began in February, is not expected to be completed at the meeting that begins at 12:30 p.m. in University Hall, UM System spokesman John Fougere said.

“There is no announcement of any kind expected on Friday,” Fougere said.

The Presidential Search Committee, a 16-member body that included the nine curators, finished its work Oct. 5 after conducting finalist interviews and making recommendations. The curators met in closed session for about three hours on Oct. 6.

No names of finalists have been released and members of the search committee have refused requests for interviews. Curators Chairwoman Pam Henrickson defended the secrecy surrounding the search at a news conference after the curators concluded their most recent meeting.

Secrecy is necessary “to make the candidates feel comfortable” they can be considered “without endangering their current status,” she said.

One name, Roderick J. McDavis, president of Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, has surfaced through news reports of inquiries from Columbia to faculty at that school. McDavis had already said he would leave his position in June and would look for other employment.

McDavis has not responded to messages seeking an interview.

UM is seeking a new president to replace Tim Wolfe, who resigned Nov. 9 amid protests over racial issues on the Columbia campus. Wolfe became the target of protesters after he ignored the Concerned Student 1950 group when it blocked his car during the 2015 Homecoming parade.
Wolfe was weakened by infighting with then-MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, whom Wolfe tried unsuccessfully to fire. When the curators accepted Wolfe's resignation, the board also decided to push Loftin out.

Mike Middleton, a former deputy chancellor, was called from retirement and has been interim president. Middleton has said he would not be a candidate for the permanent position. Hank Foley, hired from Penn State University in 2013 as UM System vice president of research and economic development, was named interim chancellor to replace Loftin.

**With booming interest in Greek life, Mizzou looks for a new administrator**

The University of Missouri-Columbia's top Office of Greek Life official, Janna Basler, is getting help.

Mizzou posted a listing for a director of Greek life two weeks ago. The person filling the position will report to Basler, who was promoted to senior role in the Office of Student Life.

"For quite some time, Janna has been serving dual roles," Mizzou spokesman Christian Basi said, adding that funds were recently reallocated to fund the director role. "We have been seeing a significant increase in the number of students involved in Greek organizations and felt that we needed to have another individual to help with the increasing demands that we were experiencing."

The money for that position comes from student fees and Mizzou's general operating fund, Basi said.
Local entrepreneurs receive investment boost

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Several local tech entrepreneurs will now have the funds to continue building their own companies in the mid-Missouri area.

**ABC17 News reported in June about a newly created Missouri Innovation Accelerator Fund. The city of Columbia, the University of Missouri and the Missouri Innovation Center, or MIC, were among some of the investors that put money into the fund.**

The entrepreneurs received the money at an event held last week at the Missouri Innovation Center. There were four companies that received an initial investment.

Missouri Innovation Center's Bill Turpin said the entrepreneurs received the money as more of an investment than a loan. Steve Wyatt, the vice chancellor of economic development at the University of Missouri explained the investment philosophy to ABC17 News in June: "If there's an event where we can cash out or a lot of times it can be bought out, there will be a return to the fund. The fund will distribute the profits depending on how much the investment was, so there will be a payback to the investors."

Four companies received investments October 12. Turpin said they are all homegrown companies.

"All four are developing products with really large commercial operations," Turpin said.

The four companies were:

- NVision Ag, Peter Scharf: NVision Ag has created a precision agriculture product that helps farmers make data-driven decisions about fertilizer application.
- Recordly, Sintia Radu: Recordly won the MU app creation contest this year with an iOS application that provides annotated transcripts of interviews for journalists. The app uses IBM's Watson service to convert speech to text.
- eSports LLC, Conor Hall: eSports LLC created EloScout, a collegiate esports recruiting service that helps universities build competitive varsity gaming programs (Columbia College was its first client). eSports LLC also created a subsidiary, eSportsRec, an online intramural gaming platform where students can compete against their classmates and be recognized by the school as the "best gamer on campus."
AdSwapper, Amos Angelovici: AdSwapper is a personalized ad firewall that runs transparently in the background and enables users to control their ad-viewing experience, and earn money doing so.

Sintia Radu said Recordly began as a student project at the University of Missouri last year and it was an honor to receive the investment plus earn the trust of their investors.

"This funding from MIC would help us finalize our product, as well as launch on the market and make it available to our users as soon as possible," Radu said. "It would also cover market research and additional business-related expenses."

Amos Angelovici had more than 17 years of managerial experience for large companies and start-ups. He said he was passionate about start-ups and investment opportunities. He said AdSwapper will launch its product early next year.

"We are happy that the mid-Mo Accelerator has decided to invest in AdSwapper," he said. "The mid-Mo Accelerator is an important partner in developing successful companies and their investment is a validation of the huge business potential in the mobile advertising market and the solution AdSwapper provides mobile customers."

Both Wyatt and Turpin have said in the past that they believe local investment funding might encourage more businesses and companies to stay in mid-Missouri and help boost the economy here.

---

**University of Missouri seeking administrator to oversee fraternities, sororities**

The University of Missouri is looking for a full-time director of Greek Life after deciding more oversight is needed because of an increasing number of fraternity and sorority members on campus.

The duties of director of Greek Life were being performed by Janna Basler, senior associate director of Student Life at MU. Basler was placed on administrative leave Nov. 11 after a video
went viral showing her physically confronting a photographer during a demonstration on campus. She returned to work in early December.

Basler will remain as senior associate director of Student Life, MU spokesman Christian Basi wrote in an email.

“Janna’s current position has not changed,” he wrote.

In 2015, 27 percent of undergraduates, or 7,600 students, were members of fraternities or sororities, up from 21 percent in 2005, Basi wrote.

How Earth’s oldest animals were fossilized

The fossils are among the strangest ever found: a corkscrew-shaped tube, an eight-armed spiral, and a mysterious ropelike creature that might have engaged in the oldest known sexual reproduction among animals. They are Earth’s oldest complex organisms, dating back to 571 million years ago, and found on every continent except Antarctica. Their bizarre forms defy classification; some have been described alternately as jellyfish or worms, algae or fungi. But scientists have for years been chasing an even bigger mystery about the so-called Ediacara biota: How could these mostly soft-bodied animals be preserved in rock? Now, one team of scientists has an answer. Their research suggests that in the ancient oceans, silica—the primary compound in quartz—precipitated out of the seawater, then covered and entombed the organisms before they decayed.

“[This paper] will change our way of thinking about Ediacara-type preservation,” says James Schiffbauer, a paleontologist at the University of Missouri in Columbia, who was not involved in the new study. He adds that the process might not be as straightforward as scientists thought.

Most fossils exist thanks to how they were buried plus the makeup of their original tissues. Bones and shells from hard-bodied creatures like dinosaurs and oysters preserve more easily than soft tissues, which decay rapidly after death. That means that most of the fossil record is biased in favor of creatures with hard components. “One of the big questions that we have in really all of paleontology … is how accurately can we read the fossil record as the history of life?” Schiffbauer says.
Before the appearance of the Ediacara biota, named for the Ediacara Hills in South Australia where scientists first found these fossils, all known life on Earth was microscopic. That’s because scientists hadn’t found any evidence of complex life until the “geologically abrupt” entrance of the Ediacaran fossils, says Yale University paleontologist Lidya Tarhan, lead author on the new study. But is this sudden explosion of the fossil record just a preservation bias or is it a sign of a massive environmental trigger for the biota’s emergence? Finding out how the group became fossils “is one of the most important steps in resolving what these organisms are and where they fall in our sense of the evolution of complex life,” she says.

So Tarhan and her team set out to find the answer. They knew the animals lived in shallow waters on the sea floor, and that sand stirred by storms would sometimes cover the organisms. The leading theory for their preservation was that these sand grains molded around dead bodies, and the mold continued to exist long after the bodies decayed. For that to happen, “you have to cement those grains, and you have to do it early,” Tarhan says. Previous work hadn’t addressed how that cementing could have happened. But Tarhan’s team had a theory: Researchers knew the Ediacaran oceans contained far more dissolved silica than modern ones, in part because creatures that soak up silica, like sponges, were rare. So silica was the perfect candidate for a prehistoric glue.

To test their hypothesis, the team took fossils from the South Australian outback and sawed them into slivers of rock so thin that light, passing through them under a microscope, illuminated the ancient grains. “The grains are pretty much floating in what looks like a sea of cement, and they’re not very compacted,” Tarhan says. Her team confirmed that the “sea” was indeed silica. And because the grains weren’t compacted, they must have been loose as the silica cement formed around them. Finally, the team concluded that the silica-based cements were not chemically identical to the silica found in the quartz sand grains, leaving them with only one source for the cement: seawater.

Because this style of siliceous fossilization extends long before and after the Ediacaran, the biota’s appearance—and disappearance—was not just an accident of the fossil record, Tarhan says. Instead, they must represent the group’s actual evolutionary beginning as well its ultimate extinction. “It makes a lot of sense,” says Shuhai Xiao, a geobiologist at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, who was also not involved in the study. “The next step is to take this model somewhere else, and to test it to see if it works” at other Ediacaran sites around the world.
Two fraternities get final extension to install sprinkler systems

COLUMBIA — Two MU fraternities will continue to house students for roughly two more years without fire sprinkler systems.

Kappa Alpha Order, at 1301 University Ave., and Delta Tau Delta, at 506 E. Rollins St., are equipped with fire extinguishers and smoke detectors but do not have sprinkler systems, Columbia Assistant Fire Chief Brad Fraizer said. The two houses are in violation of an ordinance passed by the Columbia City Council in 2009 that requires all university-related housing to have a sprinkler system.

Both fraternities have submitted plans to the Columbia Fire Department to be in compliance with the ordinance by June 1, 2019.

"Essentially it comes down to funding," Fraizer said. "That's really the crux of the matter."

A sprinkler system can cost an estimated $100,000 for a house to install, according to previous Missourian reporting.

The last person to die in a fire in Greek housing was Dominic Passantino, a Sigma Chi fraternity member. He lost his life in 1999 when a candle he lit and placed in a shoebox ignited his bedding. His mother spoke to City Council in 2008, saying that her son could have saved by a sprinkler system.

Breck Anderson, president of Delta Tau Delta's housing corporation, said the fraternity is waiting to install the new sprinkler system when its new house is built. "It didn't make any sense to install the system and then tear down the house within a couple of years," he said.

Jesse Lyons, assistant executive director for advancement for Kappa Alpha Order's national governing organization, said the MU chapter intends to meet the new deadline by building a new house.

"The extension was requested to give the corporation additional time to organize resources to comply with the new codes," he said in a statement. "Our chapter housing corporation fully intends to meet the agreement in the extension timeline."

Fraizer said if the fraternities don't meet the new deadline they will have to pay fines or could even lose their housing permit.
"This is the absolutely last extension," he said.

Delta Tau Delta had previously asked for a deadline extension due to funding, according to previous Missourian reporting. In 2015, the council voted to give six fraternities at the time — Delta Tau Delta, Sigma Nu, Kappa Alpha Order, Theta Chi, Lambda Chi Alpha and Acacia — until June 1 to install systems.

In 2015 Anderson said Delta Tau Delta's housing corporation had been working on starting a capital campaign to raise the money. Anderson told the Missourian last week that, if all goes as planned, construction on the new house could begin in May 2018.

Delta Tau Delta and Kappa Alpha Order are set to start construction no later than June 1, 2018. Until then, the fraternities will undergo frequent, unannounced fire inspections and fire alarm drills.

The fire department also inspected the properties and made a list of items that needed to be corrected before the beginning of this semester.

Benchmarks in both plans include:

- **July 1, 2017** (Delta Tau Delta only) — determination whether water supply to building is adequate for sprinkler system in proposed new house.
- **January 1, 2018** — letter from a licensed design professional confirming having been hired to work on the new house. The letter should also include details of the services the designer will provide and a timeline detailing steps to obtain necessary permits.
- **March 1, 2018** — submit a 75 percent complete construction plan to the Fire Department for review.
- **May 1, 2018** — submit a complete construction plan that meets the requirements of the 2015 International Fire Code and all city ordinances and code to the city for review.
- **June 1, 2018** — vacate the house to begin demolition and new construction.
- **August 31, 2018** (Kappa Alpha Order only) — establish adequate water supply to building.

The plans state that students will only be allowed to move in once the new houses undergo inspections by the fire department.

Columbia first adopted a mandate on sprinkler systems in fraternity and sorority houses in July 2008, according to previous Missourian reporting. At the time, paying for them was an issue as well. Jeffrey Beeson, then-vice president of public relations for the Interfraternity Council, asked the council to consider a seven to 10-year plan for installing the systems. He said that timeframe would allow the chapters to raise sufficient funds. Columbia Fire Department Battalion Chief Steven Sapp said the timeframe should be shorter.

In March 2009, the city council unanimously passed an ordinance requiring 13R sprinkler systems to be installed in university-affiliated housing. A 13R sprinkler system is specifically designed for commercial properties, Frazier said. The sprinklers can save lives but do not ensure structural safety, according to previous Missourian reporting.