UM System enrollment increased 19 percent between 2005 and 2015

Among the end-of-year reports the University of Missouri Board of Curators heard was one showing system enrollment increased between 2005 and 2015.

The curators voted on only one action item Thursday at the final curators meeting of 2016 at University of Missouri-St. Louis — a unanimous decision to begin a doctoral of business administration program at UMSL.

Steve Graham, UM senior associate vice president for academic affairs, said enrollment systemwide increased 19 percent between the fall 2005 and 2015 semesters, from 48,434 to 57,785. That was due in large part to a 19 percent increase at MU and a 50 percent increase at Missouri University of Science and Technology, Graham said.

However, between 2015 and this fall, MU enrollment decreased by 6 percent, a change that has been well documented. Officials at MU have chalked up the decline to several factors, including a dip in the number of high school graduates in Missouri and damage to the campus’ image after massive protests at MU in fall 2015 toppled UM President Tim Wolfe and made international headlines.

“We’re right in the trough right there where there’s a significant drop in high school graduates in Missouri,” Graham said, noting that enrollment was mostly flat at the other three system campuses, in St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla. Graham said the number of people graduating high school in the state is expected to increase by 2020.

In response to a question from one curator about how to appeal to higher-achieving high school students, MU interim Chancellor Hank Foley said the university has to find a way to compete with regional universities that have honors colleges with bigger endowments as those universities can offer more full-ride scholarships.

“Right now we are losing top-ranked high school students with high ACT scores, frankly, to Arkansas and Alabama,” Foley said. “I hear that daily.”

Later in the day, Ryan Rapp, assistant vice president for finance and the system’s chief audit executive, said the functions the UM System provides its four campuses, via human resources, information technology and myriad other areas, would cost between $80 and $90 million if the four campuses had to do it locally.
Medical plans that the system can offer save $42 million a year, Rapp said, and together, the credit rating of the system is AA+: the only campus that reaches near that rating by itself is MU, at AA. Combined, the campuses spend $14.3 million less on supplies due to volume contracting, $7.6 million less in investment management expenses and $3 million less in insurance the campuses pay than if each were done individually, Rapp said.

The costs saved through efficient, centralized administrative support and programs at the system level save the campuses a total of about $150 million a year, he said.

Thursday began with the curators going into closed sessions, both for the board as a whole and for the Compensation and Human Resources Committee, and ended with closed sessions for the board and audit and health affairs committees.

The curators’ final meeting of 2016 concludes Friday with a public audit committee meeting, votes on approving minutes of previous meetings, a report form interim President Mike Middleton and another closed session with all nine members. Board Chairwoman Pam Henrickson and Curator Donald Cupps also will be recognized as they are retiring after Friday.

**MISSOURIAN**

**Uncertain future of state funding looms over UM curators meeting**

KATIE KULL, 13 hrs ago

ST. LOUIS — The UM System Board of Curators won’t have to hash out a budget until spring, but concerns about funding the four-campus system arose in several presentations at the curators’ meeting Thursday.

The curators heard presentations about economic development, system efficiency, financial aid and enrollment. They couldn’t shake the specter of a possible decline in state funding.

Last year, the UM System grappled with a $3.8 million reduction in state appropriations, according to previous Missourian reporting. The curators lessened the blow by instituting a hiring freeze, halting raises and reducing some salaries and expenses.
It's uncertain how much state funding the system will receive next year.

Steve Knorr, the UM System vice president for university relations, pointed out in a report that the state has its own budget gap. Despite Gov. Jay Nixon’s efforts to close it by cutting about $200 million in funding, Gov.-elect Eric Greitens may have to cut an additional $200 million when he takes office, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

“The challenges of the budget are going to be front and center for this next administration and, quite frankly, for us,” Knorr said.

As a public university, the UM System partially depends on state appropriations to fund its programs.

In 2015 and 2016, 35 percent of UM System funding came from the state. This year, 52 percent of the system’s funding came from student tuition and fees, according to a financial aid report.

Before 2011, state money was the largest source of revenue.

Ryan Rapp, the UM System interim vice president for finance and chief financial officer, said the system would have to find ways to ease the burden on students.

“The University of Missouri is more tuition-dependent than it has ever been,” Rapp said. “This is going to require more coordination and focus on our tuition rate, enrollment management and financial aid strategies.”

In another presentation, Rapp extolled the efficiency of the four-campus system model, highlighting relatively low administrative costs compared to peer state college systems and savings on information technology.

But looking ahead, he said, the system might have to be even more streamlined.

“As the picture for funding continues to evolve, this will force us to continue to find more efficiencies,” he said.
UM hiring, recruiting practices should be revamped, report says

To increase diversity and equity in the University of Missouri System, the top priority should be to revamp hiring practices for faculty and staff and recruitment for students, an official involved in the process said.

A diversity and inclusion audit report on the university system and a response to it were released Wednesday. S. David Mitchell, MU School of Law professor and associate dean for academic affairs, was chairman of the UM System Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force, which prepared the 21-page response to the audit put together earlier this year by IBIS Consulting Group. Mitchell said expanding the system’s reach, or that of any campus, to potential candidates could be as simple as placing an ad somewhere new.

Speaking to students, faculty and staff about how to improve processes for recruitment, as well as identifying areas where the university has not tried to recruit, also could help improve outcomes, Mitchell said. Before interviews begin for positions, he said, there should be training for recruiters to reduce implicit biases.

Diversifying recruitment and hiring goals was one of the main points of the response, which took information from the 164-page audit report and made recommendations on how to make each campus and the UM System more inclusive.

Major findings in the report included a discrepancy between campus demographics and the academic units’ beliefs related to diversity; that a low number of candidates for faculty jobs come from underrepresented groups; and that the number of those hired is even lower. The same was found for staff positions. Tenure-track minority faculty are disproportionate to white faculty, the report found, and tenure review committees have race and gender imbalances.

The audit was among diversity initiatives agreed upon by the University of Missouri Board of Curators on Nov. 9, 2015, the same day former UM System President Tim Wolfe resigned under pressure from students protesting over race issues on campus. The report, compiled by IBIS Consulting Group, cost the system $1.1 million, system spokesman John Fougere said.
For faculty retention, Mitchell said, efforts such as making spousal accommodations or “cluster hiring” — hiring more than one person of a particular ethnic group at a time — can help make people feel more comfortable staying long-term. “We recognize the fact that individuals become hot commodities,” he said. “How do we keep them?”

Much of the work to diversify MU and campuses in St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla will fall to Kevin McDonald, MU chief diversity officer, who can form groups to monitor progress and initiate changes to increase diversity.

McDonald declined an interview Wednesday with the Tribune but provided an emailed statement saying he lauded the work of the task force and the participation of the campus community in the audit, noting it will be “foundational to our efforts moving forward.”

“We are charting a path forward with the full support of leadership from our Board of Curators and at the system and campus levels and I look forward to working collaboratively with all of our campuses to identify initiatives that address the findings and the responses put forth by the diversity task force,” McDonald said in the statement.

Though many things can be done in the short term, Mitchell said, many of the diversity goals will take years to accomplish. And any positive changes need to be sustained, he said.

“We’re talking about changing or impacting the culture of the institution,” Mitchell said. “That’s a prolonged process.”

Funding for some of the initiatives will have to be secured, he said. And while the report and audit serve as a framework, Mitchell said, it is important to remain flexible as each campus is different and demographics will change over time.

Mitchell said he hopes some of the people who were on the task force, which was disbanded after the response was completed, could be on advisory boards for their respective campuses or the system to monitor progress.

“We also have to be sure that we are meeting those things,” he said. “We can’t just have a report that’s been created and have it sit on a shelf and collect dust.”
It may be 'foolish' to ignore Trump's tweets, even when they look like 'fluff'

Generated from a News Bureau expert pitch.

Here are some words sent from Donald Trump's Twitter account that, depending on who you talk to, did or didn't matter in the last two weeks.

"Cancel order!" he wrote about Boeing's Air Force One development contract.

"I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally," he claimed without proof.

"[T]here must be consequences — perhaps loss of citizenship or year in jail!" he threatened about a flag-burning incident.

"The cast of Hamilton was very rude last night to a very good man, Mike Pence," he complained.

The latest salvo came Wednesday night, when Trump issued a pair of tweets directed at a union leader at Indiana's Carrier plant who publicly questioned how many jobs the president-elect actually saved the company with his recent high-profile announcement.

Trump tweeted: "Chuck Jones, who is President of United Steelworkers 1999, has done a terrible job representing workers."

Whether you follow him or block him, the U.S. president-elect's 140-character musings are, to borrow an analogy, either newsworthy pickings from the social-media Skittles bowl, or candy-coated poison for political journalism.
Deciding what's what has become the conundrum, the source of duelling campaigns over whether the world can afford to tune out the tweets of a 70-year-old conspiracy theorist who happens to be America's next commander-in-chief.

"Trump offers up novel problems for the media," says Edward Wasserman, dean of the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism in California.

While the idea of ignoring the president-elect's publicized thoughts amounts to "gross malpractice" for reporters, Wasserman says, Trump is also "a stupendously undisciplined writer and speaker whose tweeting oftentimes has no more importance than doodling at a desk."

The White House press corps takes the position that anything the U.S. president-elect does, says and writes can be newsworthy. It stands to reason, then, that any assertion or off-the-cuff remark might be too world-rattling to simply let slide.

That tweet about "cancelling" Boeing's Air Force One contract would have been easy to dismiss as more of the usual Trump bluster — except for the drop in Boeing's shares immediately afterward.

Likewise, it might have been fine to pay no mind to the bogus claim that "millions" of fraudulent voters stole the popular vote from Trump. Unless you consider it reckless to leave such an unsubstantiated declaration unchecked.

Then there was Trump's threat to jail flag-burners, a proposal so provocative it raised questions about First Amendment protections.

As for his Twitter feud with the stars of Hamilton? It certainly buried the previous day's bad press about settling the Trump University lawsuit for $25 million.

Trump's preferred medium likely makes a difference. The Twitter bully pulpit gives Trump a direct communication pipeline to his nearly 17 million followers. His very same meanderings might still be news if they were shouted from a rooftop. Unlike in a press conference environment, though, Trump can evade tough questions while controlling the news agenda.

"There's no push-back on Twitter," says Norm Ornstein, a resident scholar and media critic with the American Enterprise Institute. "We're in uncharted territory here. We've never, ever had a president communicate this way."

To Ornstein, how the news media reacts to Trump's Twitter feed is "a bit like what you'd see with a four-year-old."

"Here's a shiny object, look at it,' and meanwhile they're looting the house."

The diversion, Ornstein says, eats up bandwidth that could be devoted to pressing Trump on his cabinet appointments, his breaks with traditional diplomacy and his business conflicts of interests.
Critics have suspected it's calculated subterfuge. Ornstein isn't so sure. He has a remedy either way.

"Ignore these tweets," he urges. "And if we're not ignoring it, then at least have a press corps that … says yes, it's a shiny object, but I'm going to keep my eye on the serious stuff."

While wholesale disregard for the next president's tweets may not be the best way to serve the public's interests, neither is treating those tweets as enormously consequential, notes Kelly McBride, a media ethicist with the Poynter Institute.

Still, it can be a losing game for journalists.

"Breathless coverage of hyperbolic tweets without any context reaches two audiences in different ways: Trump-haters go through the roof. Trump-lovers dismiss journalists as partisan," she wrote in an email to CBC News.

Reporting on Trump's tweet about nixing the Boeing contract for Air Force One becomes important when it asks and answers next-level questions, McBride says.

"Can he legally do that? What would the economic impact to Boeing be? What about Boeing's workforce?"

An apparent fixation on Trump's personal scandals and erratic Twitter habits at the expense of more policy-focused reporting became a criticism of the media in the wake of his election win.

**Mitchell McKinney, director of the Political Communications Institute at the University of Missouri, was among those levelling criticism, though he now believes there's value in trying to gain as much insight as possible into the mind of a president who refuses to engage with the media.**

"It's different now. We're trying to discern the thoughts, the directions, the thinking of a president whose counsel is kept private," he says. "We have to read the tea leaves. This is another avenue into that, and it would be foolish and unwise for us to just ignore it."

At a time when a Trump surrogate can boast that "there's no such thing, unfortunately, anymore, as facts," McKinney wonders if it's wise to never take Trump's tweets literally.

"Ignore him at your peril. We label it as non-consequential fluff at our own peril. How do we know which of his claims are literal, and which are not?" he says.

"All I can say is, good luck to the media."
Mumps at 10-Year High in 2016, Says CDC


This mumps outbreak covers almost every U.S. state — 3,832 cases and counting — nearly triple the number seen in 2015. The CDC said 2016 has been the worst year for outbreaks in a decade.
MU urges students to get a third mumps vaccine

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyses.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=ba7dd68f-9eab-409d-be6b-320c5406724e

COLUMBIA- As of Thursday morning, MU is advising all students who have not contracted the mumps to receive a third MMR(Mumps, Measles, Rubella) vaccine.

There has been a presence of mumps on campus since August 22, 2016, and the number has only continued to grow.

193 cases of mumps have been identified since August (both confirmed and probable). MU Student Health, urges people to know that this number represents less than one percent of the student population.

As of today, 169 cases have been considered recovered. This means that those students are no longer infectious and they have returned to class and normal activities.

The MU Health Center is asking any student who contracts the mumps over Christmas break to notify Megan Huddleston, the nursing supervisor at (573)-884-9937 or by email at huddlestonm@missouri.edu.

If you receive the third MMR vaccine over break, you are asked to send an email to immunizations@health.missouri.edu with the date and confirmation that you have received it.

Students can get vaccinated at the Student Health Center. The price for the vaccine is $86. Faculty, staff and community members are not urged to get the third vaccine at all since they do not fall within the "at risk" population of people.

Eric Stann, community relations specialist for the Boone County Health Department said the third vaccine is recommended because it has been proven to work at other universities.
"This has been used in other situations where reported cases have occurred in university settings as a possible control measure, Stann said."

All cases of mumps in Columbia are still tied to Mizzou students, but students are going to other facilities in the area and are being confirmed with mumps.

With finals week coming up on campus, students with mumps or symptoms of mumps are being told to contact their professors and make arrangements for finals to be completed.

Christian Basi of the MU News Bureau told KOMU "If it continues in the spring, we will continue with our prevention efforts with our mitigation efforts to try and slow the disease until we no longer have it on campus".

You can find more information about the mumps outbreak on the Student Health website.

Mizzou Continues to Fight the Mumps

The University of Missouri is continuing to battle a mumps outbreak. The MU Student Health Center

notified students about eight confirmed cases of mumps at the beginning on November. Yesterday, students received and email from the school stating officials have identified 193 cases of the mumps. Of these 193 cases, only 24 are currently mobile. In Wednesday’s email, MU health officials recommended students get a third MMR vaccine. This is the same vaccine as the first two. Students are required to have two of these vaccines before living in Mizzou based communal housing, such as dorms. There are only 50 students on campus who have not met these requirements. They have gone through an extensive approval process for the university to accept their request.

Christian Basi, the assistant director of the MU News Bureau, said students can receive these vaccines on campus. “They (students) can receive the vaccine by calling and scheduling an appointment at the MU Student Health Center.” Basi said the school is encouraging students to
get the vaccine as soon as they get home for break to curb the spread of the disease. Winter break may be arriving just in time. Eric Stann, community relations specialist for the Columbia/Boone County Public Health and Human Services, said, “It would be a reasonable to expect the number of cases to decrease as students leave for winter break because the length of winter break is longer than the incubation period of the virus.”

The MU Student Health Center is encouraging individuals with symptoms of the mumps to call a medical provider and stay at home in isolation for five days.

MU students present designs for new airport terminal

Two teams of University of Missouri engineering seniors spent the past semester learning about the function of the Columbia Regional Airport for their capstone project.

The students presented hypothetical airport redesign proposals on Monday to better improve functionality, sustainability and expansion opportunities in the future.

The designs included new terminal buildings, pavement designs and storm water and wastewater management.

"Our project looks to meet the demands of customers and to attract more visitors than the airport is currently serving," said Warthog Consulting Engineers team leader Kristin Hofstetter. "We hope you can see that we're influenced by the city's devotion to learning, innovation and sustainability."

The design projects were part of their final semester capstone project. City staff attendees of the presentation rated the students on their engineering abilities, communication skills and preparation of student consulting teams.

The students' hypothetical budget was $40 million.

Currently, the city is working on plans of its own for the new terminal project, which will be funded
partly by the new hotel tax approved this summer. Half of the project is supposed to be funded by the FAA, but no word yet on when that funding will be approved.

For now, the airport staff is working on runway improvements at the Columbia Regional Airport. The airport received Federal Aviation Administration funding on that a few months ago.

MISSOURIAN

Radioactive isotopes plant would have little environmental impact, report says
STEVEN BERG, 13 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has reviewed the potential environmental impacts of a medical radioactive isotope plant under consideration in Columbia and concluded it would have little environmental impact.

David Drucker, a senior project manager for the regulatory commission, reviewed its environmental impact statement at a public hearing and open house on Tuesday night. The plant, which would be operated by Northwest Medical Isotopes, would be a partner with the MU Research Reactor in the production of Molybdenum-99, a crucial element in nuclear medicine used to diagnose life-threatening diseases.

Mo-99 is used to perform about 50,000 procedures daily in the United States. Despite its importance, the medical isotope has been imported for the past two decades because of the lack of a domestic source. Global shortages of Mo-99 further the need to create a reliable domestic supply.

People who attended the hearing were invited to comment on the environmental impact statement and the project itself. Comments made by the public will be considered by the Nuclear
Regulatory Commission when drafting its final environmental impact statement. Those who didn't attend the meeting can make comments online until Dec. 29.

The plant would be built on 7.4 acres at Discovery Ridge Research Park. Drucker said the environmental impact statement concluded the plant would have minimal impact on the environment. The commission plans to recommend that a construction permit be issued.

The review, summarized by Drucker, investigated the possible effects that building, operating and decommissioning the plant would have on multiple resources such as land use, air quality and noise, surface and groundwater, socioeconomics, waste management and transportation. Potential risks to endangered species, historic preservation and environmental justice also were considered.

Tom Lata, vice-chair of the Osage Group of the Missouri Sierra Club, said his organization worries that the clay soil the plant would be built on will cause rapid runoff into the environmentally sensitive Gans Creek watershed and affect the karst ecosystems in and around Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, which is home to the Devil's Icebox cave system.

Lata said he also believes the project could potentially disturb populations of the Indiana bat and gray bat, both of which are endangered species.

The environmental impact statement concedes there could be a small threat to the watershed.

"Converting land from open fields to impermeable surfaces such as rooftops and paved roads will increase runoff to Gans Creek," it reads. "Runoff from the proposed site could affect offsite aquatic resources by damaging downstream aquatic habitat and functions. For example, runoff can increase turbidity or introduce various chemicals or other pollutants that decrease water quality."

Still, the distance of Gans Creek and other bodies of water from the site make significant impacts unlikely, the report says, adding that Northwest Medical Isotopes would be required to create a plan for controlling runoff and pollutants.
Most comments at the public hearing came from supporters of the project. They included Columbia Mayor Brian Treece, Boone County Southern District Commissioner Karen Miller and Terry Maglich of the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

Treece said that Columbia is the ideal location for the plant and that the global need for Mo-99 makes the project extremely important.

"I want to go on record and convey our community's strong support for this project and my personal support as well," Treece said.

Dave Griggs, a member of Regional Economic Development, Inc., spoke about the economic boost the construction and operation of the plant will bring. Construction would require up to 180 workers from central Missouri, and the plant would employ 98 people full time.

Griggs estimated the project will provide $76 million in tax revenue.

"This is a perfect example of a public-private partnership," Griggs said.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will complete its final environmental impact statement in May and submit a draft safety evaluation in the summer. The project cannot be approved until the final safety evaluation report is completed next fall.
Black Learning Matters

We in higher education talk a lot about access, but we rarely include in that discussion access for all students to a rich and genuinely diverse curriculum, argues W. Robert Connor.

No MU Mention

A few years ago, James H. Tatum and his colleague at Dartmouth College William Cook published a book that was a real eye-opener. *African American Writers and Classical Tradition*, published by the University of Chicago Press, took an in-depth look at the work of Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, Ralph Ellison, Rita Dove and others to show that “African-American literature did not develop apart from canonical Western literary traditions but instead grew out of those literatures,” while at the same time adapting and transforming African cultural traditions.

Since many of the works that had the greatest influence on those writers had their roots in Greece and Rome, the book was a wake-up call for us classicists. But while it was warmly received and won the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation, it has not yet led to a strong effort to answer such questions as “What about the next generation of African-American writers, thinkers, leaders? As college students, will they have in-depth access to the literature that proved so empowering to their predecessors?”

Access to serious study of the literature and experience of ancient Greece and Rome, long the core of a liberal education, is now severely limited for all students in the United States -- whatever their ethnicity, socioeconomic status or color. No more than one college student in seven attends an institution with a department or program in the ancient Greek and Latin classics. For an African-American student the opportunities are likely to be even more restricted.

That is in part because of the limited curricular offerings at the 83 historically black colleges and universities offering bachelor’s degrees. Those institutions, Wikipedia reports, accounted for 13 percent of black higher education enrollment in 2001. Of these institutions, I know of only one, Howard University, that has had a department of classics. A similar limitation of opportunity is evident if we ask which institutions, HBCU or not, enroll the largest number of non-Hispanic African-American undergraduate students. According to [Collegexpress](https://www.collegexpress.com), the
following nonprofit four-year institutions enroll the largest number of African-Americans:

- Georgia State University
- Florida A&M University
- University of Maryland University College at Adelphi
- University of Memphis
- Troy University

More than 40,000 African-American students are enrolled at these five institutions, but only a few of the five provide a coherent program for the study of ancient Greece and Rome.

Some African-American students, to be sure, attend institutions with strong programs in the ancient world. These are often highly selective, well-endowed colleges and universities, often with aggressive minority recruitment programs. Yet even there, the percentage of African-American students in the student body is less than one might hope.

This situation needs to change, and in classics, there are signs that it can change. Many departments of classics can point to African-American students who have flourished through their study of the classics. The challenge, then, is to find ways to make such success more widespread.

That will take action both at the campus level and nationally. Fortunately, models of proven effectiveness can be adapted, such as the Teagle Foundation’s College Community Connection, which introduces low-income students from New York City public high schools to the liberal arts. Cheryl Ching, a former staff member directly involved in the program, recently looked back on one example of its success, writing in an email, “I think about the freedom and citizenship seminar that Andrew Delbanco and his colleagues at Columbia University developed for the Double Discovery students, where there was a conscious effort to relate Plato, Aristotle and all the great writers of Western civilization to lives of the mostly students of color in the program.”

Such successes are waiting to be replicated. The Paideia Program’s Living Latin program in Rome reports some spectacular results for similar students, including those at the precollegiate level. That program might be scaled up with added attention to the special needs of minority students while still in high school. Collaborative efforts among institutions, collegiate and precollegiate, might benefit from the experience of the Sunoikisis program at Harvard’s Center for Hellenic Studies.

No doubt other promising models and good ideas can be shaped, tried out and rigorously evaluated to help the next generation of students experience in depth
what proved so important in the past. In higher education these days we talk a lot about access, but we rarely include in the discussion access for all students to a rich and genuinely diverse curriculum. Making that kind of access available to all students is the real test of leadership at every level, from the individual department to the national organizations that shape educational policy.

Black learning matters.

Real Dangers of Fake News
How and why media relations pros need to step up.

No MU Mention
The proliferation and impact of fake news has dominated the real news in the weeks following the election, and despite myriad articles and broadcast stories, I am not sick of hearing about it. I believe that shining a spotlight on this misleading and arguably dangerous practice is critically necessary. And research has shown that despite all the attention on the dangers of fake news, not everyone is getting the message—including college students.

According to a recent Stanford University study of middle, high school and college students, most teenagers can’t determine when news is fake. “And, in 2016, we would hope college students who spend hours each day online would look beyond a .org URL and ask who is behind a site that presents only one side of a contentious issue. But in every case, at every level, we were taken back by students’ lack of preparation,” wrote the researchers.

Faculty and student affairs offices across the country are stepping up to help educate students and some students are taking up the issues themselves. But as media relations professionals we have some responsibilities, too, if only to prepare for the direct impact on the way in which we do our jobs.

It has never been hard to find faculty and administrators who view journalists through a skeptical lens. I have met many people on all types of college campuses who are very clear about their distrust of the media and reporters’ intentions. Though not all of it is justified, and a lot of it can be attributed to misunderstandings of the journalistic process, there are many academicians who feel they have been mistreated by the media.
This mindset is a serious barrier for those of us responsible for facilitating news coverage of an institution. The recent attention on fake news, and particularly the large volume of it, is likely to make the campus skeptics even less likely to participate in media outreach. It’s our job to make them see why opting-out may contribute the larger problem. After all, the faculty members on our campuses have performed balanced, unbiased research and can inform the public of facts. Without their participation, those left to fill the void may not be sharing the most accurate information.

And that’s not all. We need to give reluctant media participants peace of mind as well, by making sure we do our homework and proactively provide all necessary background (especially with newer, less established, outlets whose names faculty may not be familiar with) to confirm that opportunities have been carefully vetted and thought through. It’s our job to assess any risk and ease fears before presenting media opportunities – and that includes pointing out biases of the outlet, reporters or likely online responders to the piece.

And there’s another service we can help provide to our institutions – particularly those of us at institutions without journalism faculty. We can serve as resources to educate students and others about how to identify fake news. Consider arranging infosessions, incorporating tips like these or these from Merrimack College Professor Melissa Zimdars (whose list of fake news sites went viral) into current media training, and serving as guest speakers in classrooms and at student organization meetings. For those who already send a weekly email of media hits to campus, consider including a public service announcement about fake news and the credibility of outlets.

Unfortunately clickbait makes money, which means fake news isn’t going away anytime soon. And the stakes are getting higher. From a potential influence on the president election to Monday’s pizza restaurant shooting in Washington, D.C., it’s more critical than ever that people understand how to recognize the legitimacy of information. As media relations professionals, we are in a position to combat the problem that the Stanford University researchers described as "dismaying," "bleak" and "[a] threat to democracy."

And I take this responsibility very seriously.

I encourage faculty, staff and students to share resources they value when combatting fake news in the comments section of this post. I also welcome guest posts with concrete advice for addressing this issue on our campuses.