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MISSOURIAN

Salman Rushdie explains the power of art in society

By Bennito L Kelty

COLUMBIA — Truth is the objective for the artist, the writer and the journalist.

This was the message Salman Rushdie had for the crowd that filled Jesse Auditorium Friday evening, as Rushdie delivered the keynote address to open the [2017 Unbound Book Festival](#). He said that art, literature and journalism recreate the world that resonates with every human being, and people should not abandon this responsibility at a time when the idea of truth is vulnerable.

Rushdie is an award-winning novelist, whose works include "Midnight's Children" and "Satanic Verses." His novels often view Islam, India and colonialism through a satirical lens, which has led to controversy for the esteemed author.

Rushdie talked about his concerns about the public distrust of journalism. He said that not only has the government shaken the trust in journalism, but it is deeply rooted in a societal depreciation of the media. He said that the cause of this distrust comes from the overwhelming amount of information that has been made available to us.

"The more ways to get the news, the less news we get," he said. "Now, we live in a time when there is a crisis about the truth."

Rushdie stood by the importance of journalism as the fourth pillar of democracy.

"When the president is able to describe journalists as the enemy of the people, then there is something worrisome going on in society," he said.

Rushdie, who mostly writes fiction, said literature has the ability to illustrate deeper truths about being human, even when it distinguishes itself from fact. He said literature communicates through the pleasure of recognition.

"Before I went to Latin America, I read (Jorge Luis) Borges and (Gabriel García) Marquez and thought these were crazy books," Rushdie said. "Then I went there, and I realized this is how life actually is here."

Rushdie was able to make the audience laugh with comments like these. He got the most laughter when he talked about "The Satanic Verses," which led to a hit being ordered on him by the Ayatollah Khomeini, former supreme leader of Iran, and how it reflected his role as a writer in society.

"The Satanic Verses,' as you all know, caused no trouble for me at all," Rushdie said after describing the numerous censorship issues he faced with "Midnight's Children." "But as far as my dispute with the Ayatollah, let me just say this: Only one of us is still alive."

Rushdie made the point that although writers, artists and journalist have to combat power, art has the strength and resilience to win. He went on to say the role of the artist is to create more ways to communicate our experiences.

"Artists lives are made difficult by engagement with power," he said, "but the job of the artist is to open the universe."

MISSOURIAN

Lasting friendships over 50 promote wellness, emotional support

By: Olivia Peterkin

Generated from a News Bureau press release: [Older Adults Embracing 'Living Apart Together'](#)

COLUMBIA — In a large brick house on Deer Creek Court, Valerie Brown and Martha Geel are laughing about the day they stole a sawhorse barricade.

The two women say they removed it from a pothole and stashed it in the trunk of a car.

“When we stole things, which we did, they were as big as watermelons,” Brown said.

“No, not the Fudgsicles that we hid in Freida’s hood from Wyatt’s,” said Geel, quick to correct her longtime friend.

The two are part of a small group of five Columbia men and women in their early 70s who meet every other week or so to reminisce, swap stories of youthful indiscretion and enjoy one another’s company.

All of them graduated from Hickman High School in 1963 and have managed, amid many moves and marriages, to keep in touch.

Geel, 71, taught at Ridgeway Elementary School for 19 years before retiring in 2008.

Her husband, Ken, is a certified public accountant for the city, the only one in the bunch who still has a full-time job.

Brown, 71, held several public offices in Sonoma County, California, before retiring in 2012. In the few years afterward, she split time in between California and Columbia to take care of her parents before selling her California home and permanently moving to Columbia in 2015.

Janet Lasley, 72, taught genetics and biology at Hickman High School for 16 years before a brief stint working at Strawberry Hill Farms. Lasley said that she is now “fully retired and lovin’ it.”

Charley Blackmore, 71, is a retired Columbia postal worker who still accepts the occasional DJ gig in his spare time because he believes that when you really love what you do, there’s no need to retire.

“I think the older you get, the more you go back to older friendships,” Blackmore said. “I know it’s pretty interesting to me to get with people that I grew up with and talk about things that happened as far back as we can remember.

“It’s astounding how much you can remember when you get together and have those relationships.”

Lasley credits the internet, particularly social media sites like Facebook, with reuniting the group and keeping them in the loop.

“The internet is what did it because we could have constant feedback and communication. I would say that computers, more than anything else, brought us back together,” she said.

“I would say computers and the reunions that Charley sets up,” Brown said. “I think I’ve only missed one of those.”

Blackmore runs the [website for Hickman class reunions](#), and when he’s not playing music for events around Columbia, he’s working to make sure that all the Kewpie classes past and present have a way to stay connected.

“When we did get connected again, it was like we’d never been apart,” Martha Geel said. “We just started up where we left off.”

It is a common misconception that as people age, they have fewer friends and are more likely to only make acquaintances. For many, age is often characterized by negative attributes such as

loneliness, decreased mobility and depression. However, research says although older people tend to have smaller friend circles, these relationships tend to be deeper and more meaningful.

“As we grow older, we tend to have fewer friends,” said Jacquelyn Benson, assistant professor at the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences. “People are more socially promiscuous when they’re young, and after about age 25, people are more selective with their time.”

Benson’s research includes intimate relationships later in life. “Their social world is shrinking, but it’s because we get smarter as we get older about how we use our time; we begin to prioritize quality relationships.”

The group finds that in a time in their lives where death is much nearer than it was 50 years ago, it helps to have a shoulder — or four to lean on.

“All of us have lost our parents in the last five years for one reason or another, and that has bound us closer together because everybody understands what everybody else is going through,” Lasley said. “None of us goes through a crisis without the rest being there.”

Benson says that a lack of social support, whether it be people who help with instrumental tasks or emotional trials, is associated with loneliness in older adults.

“A lot of people our age are at home doing nothing, and they’re depressed, and they’re lonely,” said Karen Blackmore, Charley’s wife of 17 years.

“We’re really involved in each other’s lives,” said Lasley. “I got married, and it’s not been two years, to a guy I dated for 19 years before he finally talked me into it. They threw a surprise shower for me where everything was back in the 50s and 60s. They were there for the wedding, and Valerie filmed it. But you know, it was a big life event, and they just didn’t let it pass by.”

“She was going to try and do something quiet,” said Martha Geel.

Brown, Lasley and Geel, along with a few other women outside of this particular group have been taking trips together for the past 11 years. This year, they are going to visit Portland, Oregon.

Whether it's through book clubs, shopping trips or political activism, the women make it a point to spend a lot of time together.

“The friends that are connected — at least the women, not so much the guys — are politically, in the same ball park. So when we heard about the big [women’s] march on Saturday a few weeks ago, we all connected, and we met there, and we marched together,” said Lasley.

The men, however, are more likely to connect over sports.

“Other than us getting together and playing golf some, for a while we were getting together once a month for dinners,” said Ken Geel. “When we were in grade school and on up, we used to play sports all the time. We used to go to West Boulevard and play all day long.”

“No, we don’t have that type of group [like the women], I mean we didn’t back then. It was just everybody for themselves pretty much if you’re a guy,” said Charley Blackmore.

According to [a study](#) done in 1983, men are more likely to connect over sports, with women being more likely to discuss topics involving personal and family matters.

“I think all of us work at staying connected and taking care of each other,” said Lasley.

“We have determined that when we get to the age of needing more support in our living circumstances, that we’re going to take the west wing of the Terrace, on the third floor and the doors will just always be opening and shutting” said Martha Geel. The Terrace is a retirement community in Columbia on the Business Loop.

“For me, the value of having this friendship is like no other,” Brown said. “I know that with this group, they know all the stuff.”

“And they’ve got your back,” said Martha Geel.

“And they’ve got your back,” echoed Brown "which is priceless.”

MISSOURIAN

Beating the odds: How one Columbia couple has sustained a long-lasting marriage

By: Olivia Peterkin

Generated from a News Bureau expert pitch

COLUMBIA — Gary, 67, and Colleen, 63, Ostercamp had a bit of a rough start on their first date.

“I was living with my family, and my town was just this side of the Minnesota border,” said Colleen, who, along with her husband, spent her college years in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

“I was a half an hour late. I had missed the turnoff and drove to Minnesota,” Gary said.

“When he finally made it to my door, my dad asked him if he’d gotten cold feet,” Colleen said between fits of laughter.

Fortunately, the couple was able to make it past a rocky first date and have been happily married for 42 years.

Building a strong foundation

The Ostercamps are among the 33 percent of couples whose marriages have made it beyond the 40-year mark in the United States, according to the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University.

It doesn't hurt that the Ostercamps' home state of South Dakota happens to be among the five states with the highest rate of older adults in long-term marriages.

Despite the geographical boost in favor of their happy union, the Ostercamps' long marriage is no small feat. In fact, in the U.S., only half of first marriages last 20 years, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Ostercamps met at the University of Sioux Falls back when it was a small liberal arts college. The Christian university is still modest in size with only 55 undergraduate programs compared to MU's over 300.

The two both played instruments and were members of the school's jazz band, and music plays as much of a role in their relationship now as it did then. Colleen is a musician who plays the pipe organ at First Baptist Church in Columbia, teaches piano and is affiliated with a federation of music teachers that promotes American music. Gary works as a staff chaplain at University Hospital and teaches guitar lessons in the evenings.

"I do believe it's a nice diversion from work," said Gary, whose day job as a chaplain can sometimes take an emotional toll. His wife claims music is the couple's shared form of 'therapy.'

In the early stages of their dating relationship, their list of date spots was varied and memorable — movies, a Carpenters concert, even a funeral. "Gary was going to seminary at the time," Colleen explained.

The Ostercamps married Aug. 10, 1974, and less than a year after tying the knot, moved to Brazil for three years where they served with a Baptist group, working with small churches in efforts to reach youth through music programs.

The challenges of living as a young, newlywed couple in a foreign country proved to be a strong foundation for their relationship.

“It made our relationship independent from our parents, and from influences that could have weakened [the marriage] because we were out there on our own, and one of us would have to be the strong one while the other one fell apart a little bit,” Colleen said. “We did marry young, so we did a lot of growing up together too.”

In addition to Brazil, the Ostercamps lived in South Dakota, Florida, Minnesota and Canada before putting down roots in Columbia in July 1990.

Life in the present

Together they enjoy going out to the Missouri river, taking trips to see their son, Neil, and his wife Whitney, watching movies and eating out.

“Gary’s a nature person, so he’s taught me how to appreciate the outdoors. I was not an outdoor person at all. He gets me out the door,” said Colleen.

On his own, Gary likes to visit record stores and browse music selections, while Colleen appreciates the occasional solo shopping session.

Christine Proulx an associate professor of human development and family sciences at MU, said that couples in older marriages have “a balance of individual and couple pursuits.”

It is good for them to have independence as well, she said. “There’s nothing that says when you get older you have to spend a bunch of time together.”

“At the beginning, we did everything together,” Gary said. “We made every decision together; now, not so much.”

Trust and understanding, as well as allowing the room for mistakes to be made has kept the two going over the past four decades of marriage.

“A lot of people like to have a five-year plan or a 10-year plan or whatever, and then they try to make their marriage or a relationship fit into these blocks of time too,” Colleen said. “Life is not like that. You make so many adjustments from where you began.”

Although the two are similar in many ways, there are still certain differences that continue to make their marriage a learning process.

“For me, it’s that she has a little too much energy in the morning. I like to ease into the morning,” Gary said “But [she’s] very upbeat and positive on things, and it’s encouraging. Her spirits are always up.”

Colleen still gets mildly annoyed when Gary gets “too philosophical.”

“I try to reel him in or tune him out,” she said, with a soft chuckle.

Gary compares a successful marriage to playing a song, “You’re gonna make mistakes, but you kinda have to learn. In spite of the mistakes, you keep the song going. Even if you mess up as you’re playing you just have to go back in. It’s very similar to relationships,” he said. “Tuning is just a part of it.”

Colleen agreed with a musical metaphor of her own: “Find the next down beat, and you just keep going.”

Editorial: Historical Society

By Hank Waters III

Last Wednesday an important ground breaking ceremony occurred on a parking lot across from the MU Peace Park on Elm Street. It was the moment for historians, politicians, officials and other supporters of the State Historical Society of Missouri to smile at each other at the end of a hard journey and the beginning of a new one.

For more than 20 years the society has sought a new location for its vitally important operation, now crammed into the basement of the Ellis Library on the MU campus. Thank goodness for the use of Ellis space, but as years passed and the society's essential collection grew the space became ever more inadequate.

For at least a decade the current building project has been in the making. It has taken a lot of compromise and mutual encouragement from the City of Columbia, MU, the government of Missouri and society officials to get to this point. Last Wednesday an array of society stalwarts and state officials made speeches, a group of chosen diggers wielded golden shovels in a representative bed of dirt, the Columbia Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors in their gold jackets cut a ribbon and the architects stood by with graphic representations of the facility to come. The new building project was officially under way and all of us retired to the Missouri Theater for a drink and an egg roll.

The new historical society building will be among the most important in the city. Located where the MU red campus abuts downtown Columbia, it is designed to finally fulfill its collection, education and general entertainment functions. Deemed the Center for Missouri Studies, a new emphasis on the history of our state will be conducted in league with the MU College of Arts and Sciences. Finally the society will have space to properly store, care for and display its priceless inventory of artifacts and objects of art.

Audiences can enjoy special programs presented by society curators and other entertainers. I can envision a steady array of these attractions advertised far and wide, bringing many thousands of visitors who never had reason to visit the existing space.

A primary feature of the new design is its front and back door configuration. Inviting entrances will open toward the campus to the south and on the other side toward downtown Columbia. Parking will be built alongside the building, attacking what has always been a major drawback of the current location.

As a member of the society board of trustees I have had a close-up look at the extraordinary effort President Stephen Limbaugh and Executive Director Gary Kremer have made over the past several years making the case with state officials for funding.

During a period when funding was tight, legislative leaders gathered around the project in a show of bi-partisan support. The historical society building became a catalyst for collaboration between Republican legislative leaders and the Democratic governor to provide essential funding. Going forward a similar level of support will be needed to fund operations in the building.

Now, on to the next generation of the State Historical Society of Missouri, already a very good operation among its peers but because of its excellent staff destined to achieve a new order of quality and excitement.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The U.S. Makes It Easy for Parents to Get College Loans—Repaying Them Is Another Story

The federal Parent Plus loan program has millions of borrowers, many with subprime credit ratings; its default rate exceeds the rate for U.S. mortgages at the peak of the housing crisis

By Josh Mitchell

No MU Mention

Millions of U.S. parents have taken out loans from the government to help their children pay for college. Now a crushing bill is coming due.

Hundreds of thousands have tumbled into delinquency and default. In the process, many have delayed retirement, put off health expenses and lost portions of Social Security checks and tax refunds to their lender, the federal government. Student loans made through parents come from an Education Department program called Parent Plus, which has loans outstanding to more than three million Americans. The problem is the government asks almost nothing about its borrowers' incomes, existing debts, savings, credit scores or ability to repay. Then it extends loans that are nearly impossible to extinguish in bankruptcy if borrowers fall on hard times.

As of September 2015, more than 330,000 people, or 11% of borrowers, had gone at least a year without making a payment on a Parent Plus loan, according to the Government Accountability Office. That exceeds the default rate on U.S. mortgages at the peak of the housing crisis. More recent Education Department data show another 180,000 of the loans were at least a month delinquent as of May 2016.

“This credit is being extended on terms that specifically, willfully ignore their ability to repay,” says Toby Merrill of Harvard Law School’s Legal Services Center. “You can’t avoid that we’re targeting high-cost, high-dollar-amount loans to people who we know can’t afford to repay them.”

Parent Plus is one thread in a web of higher education loan programs that have come to resemble the subprime mortgage industry a decade ago, given the shaky quality of many of the loans.

The number of Americans with federal student loans, including through programs for undergraduates, parents and graduate students, grew by 14 million to 42 million in the decade through last year. Overall student debt, most of it issued by the federal government, more than doubled to \$1.3 trillion over that period.

The financing fueled a surge in college enrollment. Between 2005 and 2010, enrollment grew 20%, the biggest increase since the 1970s. The Obama administration supported such lending in an effort to widen access to college education. Nearly four in 10 student loans—the vast majority of them federal ones—went to borrowers with credit scores below the subprime threshold of 620, indicating they were at the highest risk of defaulting, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of data from credit-rating firm Equifax Inc. That figure excludes borrowers, such as many 18-year-old freshmen, who lacked scores because of shallow credit histories. By comparison, subprime mortgages peaked at nearly 20% of all mortgage originations in 2006.

Roughly eight million Americans owing \$137 billion are at least 360 days delinquent on federal student loans, nearly the number of homeowners who lost their homes because of the housing crisis. More than three million others owing \$88 billion have fallen at least a month behind or have been granted temporary reprieves on payments because of financial distress. New research from Federal Reserve economists shows that most student-loan defaults are among borrowers who had weak credit.

Consumer advocates say defaults will continue to mount as loans taken out after the recession enter the repayment cycle. An Education Department spokesman said the agency is reviewing Parent Plus and all other programs “to determine how best they can fit into the administration’s goals of helping students and taxpayers, while promoting excellence in education.”

President Donald Trump pledged during his campaign to ease families’ student-debt burdens, and his campaign at one point suggested privatizing federal student loans. Senate Republicans plan to study whether to restrict access to Parent Plus as part of a broader higher-education bill expected to be debated as early as this year.

Parent Plus, created by Congress in 1980, allows parents to borrow to cover tuition and living expenses—often after their children borrow the maximum in undergraduate federal loans, capped by law at \$5,500 a year for freshmen, \$6,500 for sophomores and \$7,500 for juniors and seniors. There is no limit to how much parents can borrow. Supporters say the program ensures students can go to schools of their choice.

Rebecca McEvoy, 53 years old, had been a retired public school teacher for several years, coping with multiple sclerosis, when she turned to Parent Plus in 2010. She borrowed \$84,000 to help her oldest son through an art and design college.

After he graduated, she successfully appealed to the government to have the debt expunged under a federal law that forgives balances for borrowers deemed permanently disabled.

Three years ago, she and her husband, Dave, 64, also a retired schoolteacher, turned to Parent Plus again to help their younger son, Alex, cover costs at Ohio University. Dave McEvoy took out the loans under

his name. They borrowed \$40,000 over the past several years and expect to borrow another \$10,000 for his senior year.

The McEvoy's finances likely would have raised red flags with private lenders: They are living off modest pensions and have existing debts that eat up much of their income. "I have nothing left by the time I do my mortgage, the car, food and medical," Ms. McEvoy says.

She says they have started paying down the debt and plan to continue, but they likely won't be able to cover the full monthly payment once her son graduates in 2018.

Valerie Miller, Ohio University's director of student financial aid, says she can't comment on individual borrowers. She says the school counsels parents on all their options and on whether they will be able to make payments under Parent Plus.

Alex McEvoy, 20, says he plans to work in the tech industry and pay off his parents' loans. "I'm like, 'Mom don't worry about it. It's going to be fine,'" he says.

Obama administration officials, worried Parent Plus was heaping debt on high-risk borrowers, put in place tighter restrictions in 2011. But after schools argued stiffer underwriting would prevent many students from covering tuition, thus reducing college access for minorities and poor students, the administration rolled back the new rules.

"Without this program, our fear is that many of these families would be getting private loans at less-favorable terms or less-favorable repayment options," or they wouldn't be able to cover tuition at all, says Cheryl Smith, head of government affairs for the United Negro College Fund.

Research shows that restricting access to loans based on credit scores leads to lower college enrollment.

Enrollment in Parent Plus has grown quickly since the early 2000s. When the recession hit, private lenders tightened underwriting and many families saw savings and access to other forms of credit wiped out.

The number of families enrolled in Parent Plus jumped more than 60% since 2005, to 3.5 million as of Jan. 1. They owed roughly \$77.5 billion—an average \$22,000 per borrower, Education Department figures show.

Many borrowers are poor and older. More than one-third of such loans in recent years have gone to households that also received Pell grants, a student-aid program for families typically earning below \$30,000 a year, federal data show. Other research suggests about one-third were single parents and a similar share lacked college degrees themselves.

The program checks only a borrower's past five years of credit for major blemishes such as bankruptcy or foreclosure, and the past two years for delinquency on debts of more than \$2,085.

Consumer counselors are hearing from borrowers who make as little as minimum wage but borrowed tens of thousands of dollars and now can't repay. Some expected their children to get good jobs and pay off the loans for them. In many cases, their balances have grown with interest—most Parent Plus loans issued over the past decade carried rates of between 6% and 8%—and thousands of dollars in fees the government charges when borrowers default.

Federal law prohibits borrowers from discharging student loans in bankruptcy, except in extremely rare circumstances. Instead, the government reduces tax refunds and Social Security checks of borrowers, leaving some with below-poverty incomes, the GAO reported in December.

“If Bank of America did that, Sen. [Elizabeth] Warren would have them in the biggest hearing you’ve ever seen,” says Betsy Mayotte, a consumer advocate and student-loan expert.

The number of Americans who had wages, tax refunds or Social Security checks reduced because of unpaid student debt increased 71% between September 2010 and September 2015, according to the GAO. About 41,000 Parent Plus borrowers were among one million student-loan recipients who had checks garnished in the 2015 fiscal year. The government garnished the Social Security checks of 173,000 borrowers from student loan programs in 2015, up from 36,000 in 2002.

Other borrowers are seeking relief through plans that cut their monthly payments and ultimately forgive some debt. Enrollment in the plans, known as income-driven repayment, has more than doubled in the last three years. The government doesn’t publish data on parent participation.

“At some point, we’re going to have to realize that a bunch of loans that have been made are not going to be repaid,” says James Kvaal, former President Barack Obama’s top education adviser.

The GAO estimates taxpayers ultimately will forgive \$108 billion on student loans made through the current fiscal year. By comparison, the savings-and-loan crisis of the 1980s cost the federal government roughly \$181 billion, in today’s dollars, according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

Sherry McPherson took out Parent Plus debt in 2006 so her son could enroll in a seven month certificate program at a Seattle for-profit school that teaches commercial diving. She was an unemployed single mother with thousands of dollars in credit-card debt, a car loan and a subprime credit score. She had just retired from the Army after suffering an injury in Iraq.

The school, the Divers Institute of Technology, told Ms. McPherson she needed to borrow nearly \$16,000 to cover remaining tuition after her son maxed out on undergraduate federal loans, she recalls.

Ms. McPherson, now 50, remembers telling the school’s financial-aid administrator she wouldn’t be approved because of her shaky credit and unemployment.

“She looked at me and said, ‘Look, all we need is your Social Security number,’ ” recalls Ms. McPherson. “They approved me in three minutes.”

She hasn’t worked since, partly because she attended college and graduate school herself. Her Parent Plus balance has more than doubled. Combined with her own student loans, she now owes more than \$100,000 to the federal government.

Ms. McPherson has refinanced into an income-driven plan, which sets her payments at zero while she is unemployed.

She and her son plan to start a commercial-diving company that she hopes will allow her to pay off the debt. But when she applied for a \$60,000 loan to start the company, a private lender approved her for \$20,000, at a nearly 16% rate, because of her student debt.

John Paul Johnston, executive director at the Divers Institute, says the financial-aid officer who dealt with Ms. McPherson has left the school, and that he couldn't confirm her account. The current financial-aid director, Caycee Clark, says the school informs parents of all their options, and that often Parent Plus is the only alternative for families with no savings. The school charges \$26,000 tuition for a seven-month course.

As of late 2015, nearly two-thirds of borrowers with Parent Plus debt were between ages 50 and 64, the GAO said. Nearly four in 10 Americans age 60 and above with student debt—most of whom borrowed for children or grandchildren—reported skipping health-care needs in 2014, according to an analysis of survey data from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. That compares with 25% of above-60 Americans without student debt who said they went without such needs.

Harry Hagan, 66, of Syracuse, N.Y., delayed retirement to repay debt. He owes about \$130,000 in Parent Plus debt after helping four children through college over the past decade, including a son still in school. He estimates the debt will rise to \$175,000 once he graduates.

Mr. Hagan also owes about \$60,000 to \$70,000 in credit-card debt and a mortgage, and has a subprime credit score. He has no savings and receives a small pension from a previous employer.

A couple of years ago, he says, he called the company that services the loans and said there was no way he would be able to make the roughly \$1,200 a month payment they were expecting. The company suggested he refinance into a 30-year plan.

“I said, ‘Listen, I’m 64 years old. In 30 years, God willing, I’ll be 94. There’s a very good chance I’m not going to make it. What happens?’” Mr. Hagan recalls asking.

“They said, ‘If you die before the loan goes up, it goes away.’ I said, ‘Good, let’s do that.’”



Mizzou Blood Drive Underway

Watch the story: <http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=c797ef76-4825-4c66-84f1-0bd7ede2e774>

INSIDE HIGHER ED

What Comes After Whittier Shutdown?

Plans to close law school spark questions about future shutdowns and worries about impact on student access.

NO MU MENTION

BY RICK SELTZER APRIL 25, 2017

Whittier Law School's enrollment trends over the last five years reflect the pressures squeezing legal education across the country.

Total enrollment at the law school in Orange County, Calif., fell by more than 40 percent since 2011, from 700 students to fewer than 400 this year. Enrollment dropped as students' interest in studying law plunged across the country -- and as heightened scrutiny forced many law schools to pay more attention to their students' job-placement and bar-passage rates.

Administrators at Whittier were trying to cut the size of the law school in order to find a new balancing point, said Sharon Herzberger, the president of the law school's owner, Whittier College. They wanted to admit enough students to keep the law school financially sustainable, but also to increase selectivity so they were admitting students with a greater chance of succeeding. And they were working to do so even as the number of applications to law schools shrank.

"The enrollment has declined sometimes because of what's going on in the world and the choices of people to come to the school," Herzberger said. "And sometimes because of our desire to keep the enrollment down and make sure we're bringing in students that we feel have the capability of doing well."

That attempted balancing act ended [last week](#), when Whittier College's Board of Trustees announced that the law school will not enroll any new students. Current law students will be able to complete their degrees, although the exact details of that process are not yet set. Whittier Law School will close.

The decision vaulted Whittier into the national spotlight. The law school will be the first with full American Bar Association accreditation to close in recent memory. Its accreditation dates to

1985, and it was founded in 1966, so it does not fit the profile of a new, unestablished institution that might be expected to shutter under normal circumstances.

Consequently, some experts believe other schools are likely to follow Whittier Law in closing. Critics of legal education argue that the country still has too many law schools that do not prepare their students for legal careers and instead leave them with high levels of debt they will be unable to repay. Others retort that the number of law schools truly in danger of closing is relatively small, with estimates ranging from 10 to 25 across the country.

...

The National Landscape

Observers of legal education said the situation at Whittier Law School fits with the trends that have been sweeping the field. At a basic level, there is sharply less interest today in the education law schools are offering than there was a decade ago, said Christopher Chapman, president and chief executive officer of AccessLex Institute, a former student loan provider that is now a nonprofit organization conducting research on legal education issues.

Law schools also face new accreditation pressure. The American Bar Association has [taken action](#) against four law schools in the last year over issues including loose admissions policies and low bar-examination passage rates.

The pressures could push less prestigious law schools into a death spiral. Their applicant pools are declining, and their top students often transfer to better-known institutions. As a result, they can lose the students they admit who are most likely to pass the bar. That can make it harder for them to increase their bar-passage rates over time, which in turn cuts down on their applicant pools and drives their best students to transfer -- continuing the spiral.

Shocks like additional accreditation pressure could lead to more changes in the law school sector, Chapman said. But he stopped short of predicting a wave of closures.

“I think closing is fairly drastic,” he said. “It’s at one end of the spectrum. We’ve seen some mergers, some combinations. I think maybe you’ll see more collaborations where schools don’t close, but there might be sharing of facilities or faculty or something like that.”

Other moves in the legal education sector of late include William Mitchell College of Law and Hamline University School of Law, in St. Paul, Minn., deciding to merge [in 2015](#). Indiana Tech Law School in Fort Wayne [this fall announced plans](#) to close in June 2017. Administrators at that law school, which opened its doors in 2013 and had provisional ABA accreditation, said it had incurred an operating loss of nearly \$20 million in its brief existence and they could see no way to attract enough students to be viable in the future.

Story [continues](#)