



**Mizzou News**

*Daily Clips Packet*

August 18, 2015

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

## University of Missouri ends funding for graduate student health insurance, blames feds

**The University of Missouri, citing changes in federal policy, says it's no longer allowed to provide subsidies to its graduate students to pay for health insurance.**

The notice, sent to the university's graduate students on Aug. 14, comes less than two weeks before the start of the academic school year, potentially leaving some students in the lurch.

"The Affordable Care Act prevents employers from giving employees money specifically so they can buy health insurance on the individual market," the university stated in a letter posted online. "Graduate teaching and research assistants are classified as employees by the IRS, so they fall under this ruling."

Graduate students have to buy insurance in individual markets because they aren't eligible for the insurance plan offered to University of Missouri staff and faculty.

Earlier this year, the Internal Revenue Service released a bulletin offering guidance on this issue and outlined "severe" penalties for noncompliance, according to Steven Bloom, director of federal relations for American Council on Education.

The IRS was concerned that some employers were going to use an HRA (health reimbursement account) or flexible spending account to give money to an employee, who would then go out and purchase insurance independently, Bloom said. It was a way the IRS predicted some employers would try to avoid their obligations to offer employer-sponsored health insurance under the ACA, Bloom said.

"In a nutshell, the IRS notice says you can't do that," Bloom said.

In this case, the university can pay the students more but can only encourage the students to use the extra funds on health insurance. They can't force the students to earmark the additional compensation for health insurance, according to Sidney Watson, health law professor at St. Louis University School of Law.

To make up for the last minute change, the university says it will offer a one-time fellowship to certain graduate students who can then choose to use the extra fellowship money to purchase coverage. But now there will be less money for each student, according to the university.

“In the past, we provided subsidies only for the students who enrolled in the student insurance plan,” the letter reads. “However, we now need to distribute the same amount of money over the entire population of eligible students, thus reducing the amount we can provide to each student.”

In 2014, about 3,100 graduate students at the University of Missouri received a stipend to pay for health insurance at a cost of about \$4 million, the university reports. About 70 percent of eligible students enrolled in the insurance and received the subsidy.

It’s unclear if the new fellowship funds will be offered for next school year.

Bloom says the current situation universities face regarding this issue is an “unanticipated consequence” of the regulation. His organization is working with the IRS to provide guidance to universities to resolve the issue.

Washington University said it provides graduate students with “subsidized assistance” for payment of their insurance premiums and student health fees. The subsidy varies by school and program, said spokeswoman Susan Killenberg McGinn.

“There have been no changes by any schools to graduate students’ subsidy,” McGinn said. She did not clarify whether there would be future changes to the program.

St. Louis University said it offers coverage for graduate students and is looking into the issue, but no decisions have been made.

**AP** Associated Press    **ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

**THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**

AUGUST 17, 2015

## Graduate student employees lose health insurance subsidy

*The Associated Press*

**COLUMBIA, MO. - The University of Missouri said it's eliminating subsidies that help pay health insurance costs for graduate students employed by the school.**

**University officials say the change is due to a recent IRS interpretation of a section of the Affordable Care Act, which requires adults to have health insurance or face tax penalties, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported.**

The school said in a Friday letter to students that the law "prohibits businesses from providing employee subsidies specifically for the purpose of purchasing health insurance from individual market plans."

Since the IRS considers the university's student health insurance plan from Aetna an individual market plan, the school would be fined if it continued to give students a subsidy to help with health insurance costs, said Leona Rubin, associate vice chancellor for graduate studies.

"We're trying to comply with the interpretation of federal law," Rubin said. "We're not trying to hurt (students)."

The university is using the \$3.1 million it budgeted for the subsidies to establish one-time fellowships for those employees. All graduate students with qualifying titles, including teaching assistantships and research assistantships, will be eligible for them this fall.

University spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said the money can be spent on tuition, books, rent or other expenses. She said the university can't give students money solely for health insurance costs.

Graduate Professional Council President Hallie Thompson said students started a private Facebook group Friday afternoon to discuss the change. She said some students have said they wished the college had informed them earlier of the subsidy elimination.

"People are seriously up in arms about this," Thompson said. "They depend on this insurance... we need it every money and every day."

The school first learned of the problem with health insurance subsidies late July and sought an outside legal opinion. University lawyers met and discussed the subsidies July 29.

Rubin said the college then contacted other university to see how they were handling the change and reviewed its budget to see how it could assist students. She said the college wanted to explore its options for assisting students before informing students about the subsidy cut.



## McCaskill Weighs in on Grad Student Insurance

Watch story: <http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=ce7032d4-6b93-4ccb-a05d-1032a4bf0aef>



## Missouri Ends Subsidies for Grad Student Worker Health Insurance

August 18, 2015

**The University of Missouri notified graduate student employees that it will no longer pay for their health insurance, the *Columbia Daily Tribune* reported.** In a letter to students, the university said businesses like theirs were prohibited from “providing employees subsidies specifically for the purpose of purchasing health insurance from individual market plans,” in accordance with the Affordable Care Act. A university administrator attributed the change to a recent interpretation of the law by the Internal Revenue Service, saying that health care plans such as Missouri’s Aetna package for grad students are “individual market plans” and therefore exempt from employer subsidies. Other Missouri employees use one of a number of “employer-sponsored plans” and are therefore unaffected, the university explained in an online memo.

The university said not complying with the law could result in fines. It is reportedly using the \$3.1 million originally budgeted for health insurance subsidies for graduate student employees to create one-time fellowships of between \$600 and \$1,200 for those affected, to be spent at their discretion. Starting in the spring, graduate student employees will have to pay completely out of pocket for health insurance.

Graduate students have taken to Twitter and other social media to express their outrage and concern about being able to pay for health care. John Meador, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology, told KOMU that the university effectively “eliminated my ability to function as a graduate student. ... They knew about it. I believe they could have warned us earlier.” The university became aware of the issue in late July and consulted lawyers and various national organizations for advice before notifying students late last week.

The change could affect other graduate student employees elsewhere in the U.S. Andy Brantley, president and chief executive of College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, said via email that several colleges and universities have "expressed concern about this issue, and we have been working with other higher ed associations to get clarity from the IRS." He added, "We are hoping the agency will issue a short-term waiver as it deliberates application of the [Affordable Care Act] in these situations so colleges and universities can move forward this year without fear of liability."



## Graduate student employees lose health insurance subsidy

Associated Press 2:05 p.m. EDT August 17, 2015

**COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - The University of Missouri says it's eliminating subsidies that help with health insurance costs for graduate students employed by the school.**

**The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that university officials say the change is due to a recent IRS interpretation of a section of the Affordable Care Act.**

The school said in a Friday letter to students that the law prohibits businesses from providing employee subsidies specifically for the purpose of purchasing health insurance from individual market plans.

Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin says the IRS considers the university's student health insurance plan an individual market plan. Rubin says because of the IRS classification, the school would be fined if it continued to give students with assistantships a subsidy to help with health insurance costs.

## University of Missouri ends graduate student subsidies for health insurance

**University of Missouri officials, citing changes in federal policy and IRS rule interpretation, said the school will no longer provide subsidies for graduate students' health insurance.**

The announcement came Aug. 15 — just nine days before the start of the fall semester.

In past years, subsidies for graduate students who chose to have insurance were paid from a qualifying assistantship or fellowship. Under the Affordable Care Act, employers cannot give employees money to purchase insurance on the individual market; graduate teaching and research assistants are classified as employees by the IRS. The IRS categorizes the university's student health insurance plan an "individual-market plan," officials said in a release.

The university became aware of the policy change July 21 and said efforts to find the best alternative were the reason for the late announcement.

Because of the policy change, the university will allocate one-time fellowships for the fall semester to qualifying graduate students in addition to the stipends they receive from their academic work. The amount of the fellowships will vary from \$620 to more than \$1,200 based on whether the student is domestic or international and the amount of their full-time equivalent appointment, officials said. The amount of the fellowship will be less than the previous years' subsidies due to a larger population receiving the fellowships, according to the release.

In a letter to students, Mizzou Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin apologized for the "lack of appropriate notice and prior consultation," saying he understands the fellowships are "only a short-term fix." He appointed Dean Kristofer Hagglund of the School of Health Professions to chair a task force to propose alternative plans in a report no later than Oct. 31.

"Immediately after that report is received, I will convene appropriate administrators and graduate student leadership to decide the way forward," Bowen wrote.

The cost of the fall fellowships for the university will total about \$3 million. To give all students a fellowship equal to the past subsidy for insurance would cost the university \$7.6 million, according to the release.

Domestic students may purchase student health insurance for more than \$3,000 for a full-year coverage. The enrollment deadline is Sept. 11.

## COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

# Graduate students at MU discuss walkout after losing insurance subsidies

GEOFF WEST, 10 hrs ago

**COLUMBIA — MU graduate students spoke Monday of unionizing, staging a mass walkout and suing for breach of contract in response to the university's decision to abruptly end its subsidized health insurance last week.**

**These ideas drew loud applause from about 500 graduate students gathered at a forum at Middlebush Hall, led by the Graduate Student Association.**

In a Friday morning email, MU associate vice chancellor for graduate studies Leona Rubin notified students that the university would no longer provide health insurance subsidies due to an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act. The subsidies would end effective Saturday.

“Our Student Health Insurance Plan from Aetna is considered an 'individual market plan,' and graduate (teaching assistants) and (research assistants) are classified as employees by the Internal Revenue Service,” the email read. “The IRS has ruled that institutions of higher education are employers subject to this ruling and as such cannot provide subsidies to their employees, in our case, graduate students.”

State Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, attended the forum and said he was so frustrated by what happened he had trouble sleeping Sunday night.

“I made it very clear to administration, and I will continue to make it very clear: You are owed an apology for how this was mishandled,” Kendrick told the students.

Kenneth Bryant Jr., president of the Graduate Student Association, said the end of the university's insurance subsidies is only the latest instance of graduate students being slighted. In June, the MU Office of Graduate Studies announced that it would raise stipends for all graduate teaching assistantships while cutting tuition waivers for students with 10-hour appointments to 50 percent, according to previous *Missourian* reporting.

"As a population, we are being exploited," Bryant said. "We are vulnerable."

Matt McCune with the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students said the university's timing was unacceptable, seeing as the university was notified by the UM System on July 21 that the subsidies would have to end.

"Why did you wait 'til 13 hours before my insurance expired?" McCune said. "If you're an international student, they waited until 14 days after your new insurance started."

McCune said the University of Alabama, Louisiana State University and University of North Texas are among the schools where administrators have ended insurance subsidies for graduate students.

Organizers urged graduate students to contact legislators, seek support from faculty and alumni, share their stories on Twitter and YouTube — anything to rally support for legislative changes and inspire action by the university.

In lieu of subsidies, MU is offering all graduate students a one-time fellowship. The amount of the fellowship varies by position:

- Domestic students working 20 hours per week: \$1,240
- Domestic students working 10 hours per week: \$620
- International students working 20 hours per week: \$709
- International students working 10 hours per week: \$620

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin released an apology and explanation to graduate students after the forum, which ended with hundreds of graduate students marching to the MU Columns.

“I have heard from many of you regarding the hardship that changes to the graduate student health insurance subsidy places on our students and their families,” Loftin's statement read. “I am also aware that you were given only a one day notice of these changes and that graduate student leadership was consulted only a few hours before the announcement was sent out by the Office of Graduate Studies. “For this lack of appropriate notice and prior consultation, I apologize to you both personally and on behalf of the university's administration.”

Loftin said he has requested the creation of a task force that includes university officials and graduate students for recommendations on providing affordable insurance. The recommendations are due to Loftin by Oct. 31.



## **Graduate student employees lose health insurance subsidy**

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — **The University of Missouri says it's eliminating subsidies that help with health insurance costs for graduate students employed by the school.**

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that university officials say the change is due to a recent IRS interpretation of a section of the Affordable Care Act.

The school said in a Friday letter to students that the law prohibits businesses from providing employee subsidies specifically for the purpose of purchasing health insurance from individual market plans.

Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin says the IRS considers the university's student health insurance plan an individual market plan. Rubin says because of the IRS classification, the school would be fined if it continued to give students with assistantships a subsidy to help with health insurance costs.



## Graduate Students Discuss Next Steps After Losing Health Insurance

**On Friday, many University of Missouri graduate students found out via email they would no longer receive help from the university to pay for their health insurance.** The response on social media was strong and on Monday graduate students from across campus gathered to discuss their concerns and plan for their next step.

Graduate students received this news little more than 14 hours before graduate student health insurance coverage lapsed. This decision affects graduate students from every department who work for MU as teaching assistants, research assistants and library assistants.

One of the graduate students affected is Jennifer McKinney Wilson, a fifth year PhD candidate in the sociology department. She spoke during the graduate student forum held today – which more than 400 students attended.

"When we found out on Friday that we lost our insurance, I was 22 days away from my delivery date," McKinney Wilson said.

Now she says she is 19 days away, already in labor, and has had no health insurance since Friday.

"Being a graduate student has always been a little difficult and challenging," McKinney Wilson said. "I mean you have to make sacrifices to be here. Most of us took cuts in pay and things to come here. So up until today there were sacrifices, but they were doable. And now it doesn't seem so doable."

MU's decision to stop giving grad students subsidies for their health insurance comes after an IRS rule that took effect July 1.

Under the Affordable Care Act, the IRS will fine employers who give their employees subsidies to help them buy their own insurance. The fines are \$100 per day, per employee.

MU is offering the more than three thousand students affected a one-time fellowship to help offset the costs of health insurance. The fellowship is up to \$1200, just under half of what a health insurance subsidy from the University was worth.

Graduate students shared ideas of what to do next – including unionizing and walking out of classes they are scheduled to teach next week.

## THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# U. of Missouri Chancellor Apologizes for Stripping Grad Students' Health-Care Subsidies

August 17, 2015  
by Andy Thomason

**The University of Missouri's chancellor apologized Monday for the way the college informed graduate students it was eliminating their health-care subsidies — giving them only one day's notice.**

**"For this lack of appropriate notice and prior consultation," wrote R. Bowen Loftin in a statement, "I apologize to you both personally and on behalf of the university's administration."**

According to the university, the move is a result of a new interpretation of the Affordable Care Act by the Internal Revenue Service, limiting the ability of employers to subsidize health insurance. The *Columbia Daily Tribune* reported Saturday that the university said it would use the money it budgeted for the lost subsidies to give the employees a one-time fellowship.

Observers on social media loudly protested the sudden announcement:  
[Bolton235](#)

Josh Bolton  
@JoshBolton235

Loss of #GradInsurance is a betrayal. We held up our end of the deal. When will you  
[@Mizzou](#) [@bowtieger](#)?

[1:30 PM - 17 Aug 2015](#)

er

Megan Peiser  
@MeganPeiser

Many of us are already living below the poverty line. #Mizzou admin should be ashamed for treating us this way. #GradInsurance @bowtieger  
[1:20 PM - 17 Aug 2015](#)

Pattie Quackenbush  
@SoilBiologyPQ

It's time for a vote of no confidence in the #mizzou administration. #gradinsurance #aca #GradsHaveDebt2  
[12:53 PM - 17 Aug 2015](#)

Mr. Loftin responded with the apology, and by announcing the creation of a task force to “research and propose solutions for providing affordable insurance to our graduate students.”

# the maneater

## Forum to be held on changes in graduate student health care policy

A subsidy that was once \$3,051 has been replaced by a one-time payment of \$1,240.

**Graduate Students who are employed by MU were left scrambling for health insurance after they were informed via an email from the MU Office of Graduate Studies that the university would no longer be offering them a subsidy to pay for their health care.**

The announcement that MU will not be paying for graduate students' health insurance has sparked anger and confusion. A forum will be held Monday at 12 p.m. in the basement of Middlebush Hall to discuss the change.

"Folks are angry," Graduate Student Association President Kenneth Bryant wrote in a facebook post. "We were all caught flat-footed with this drastic revocation of a need and benefit that had been promised to us by our programs and the university."

The change comes after an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act that prohibits employers from giving their employees subsidies to pay for health insurance on the private market, according to a website about the change. At MU, graduate students were previously

given that subsidy, and they were free to choose their health care provider. Now, they can enroll in the student health plan through Aetna, use the ACA Exchange or find another health care provider. Graduate students also have access to the MU Student Health Center.

Other MU employees are on a separate health plan.

As a way to continue to provide assistance for students, the university has opted to provide fellowships to the affected students. The fellowships are combined with the stipends students receive from their jobs around campus, according to the website. The subsidy was \$3,051 for students designated at .5 full-time equivalent. Those students will now be getting a one-time payment of \$1,240.

The Graduate Student Association is working to address this issue, according to Bryant's post.

Kristofferson Culmer, the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students president, said in a statement posted on the MU Graduate Professional Council's facebook page that NAGPS is also looking into the issue. NAGPS is a national organization that advocates for graduate students at local, state and federal levels.

"This is a problem that is caused because of the IRS's interpretation of one of the provisions in the ACA, see this," he wrote. "The best thing to do now is to try to bring as much attention to this as possible. Social media is a good place to start."

Since the news broke Friday morning, students have been tweeting at Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and MU. Rep. Kip Kendrick tweeted that he was looking into the situation. A private facebook group has also been created for students to discuss the change. MU Graduate Professional Council encouraged students to tweet using #GradInsurance.

Some graduate students questioned if this change in policy could be considered a breach in contract. Per the FAQ on the website, university attorneys will evaluate breach of contract claims on a case-by-case basis.

MU officials became aware of the issue July 21 and notified students Aug. 14, the day before health insurance coverage began for the fall, according to the website. During that timeframe, MU reached out to other universities, spoke with the Council of Graduate Schools and the American Council on Education for their opinion and reviewed the budget.

The university will spend about \$3 million on these fellowships, compared to the \$4.3 million it spent last year on subsidies. In 2014, 3,100 students received the subsidy, and 70 percent of eligible students opted for the student health insurance plan.

If the policy didn't change, MU would've been fined \$100 per student per day or \$36,500.

Graduate students are being affected across Missouri and the nation. UM Board of Curators student representative Tracy Mulderig tweeted that she found out about UMSL's change July 29. They are dropping the subsidy entirely, according to her tweets.

"Nevertheless, it is the position of the Executive Board of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) that graduate student stipends need to (and must) be increased - and intend to make this a priority with administrators - now more than ever," Bryant wrote.

The MU Office of Graduate Studies announced earlier this summer that it was raising the stipends for graduate students with a 10-hour job. However, it was also cutting the tuition waiver in half for those students.



## **Columbia senator claims UMHC doctor could be behind abortions**

**COLUMBIA - In a letter to University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin Monday, Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, cites concerns that a University of Missouri Health Care physician may have an agreement with Planned Parenthood to perform surgical abortions at the organization's Columbia clinic.**

In the letter, Schaefer gives the chancellor a deadline of Tuesday to respond with any documentation the university may have proving or disproving that a relationship exists.

Mary Jenkins, a spokesperson for University of Missouri Health care said the university does have a relationship with Dr. Colleen McNicholas, the doctor Schaefer cited in his letter. Jenkins said Dr. McNicholas has "refer and follow" privileges with UMHC, but that she is not a faculty member or university employee. Those privileges allow physicians who are contracted to work for another medical facility the ability to refer patients to MU hospitals and clinics and to review the patient's medical records. The privileges do not allow the physician to perform surgical operations, like abortions, at an MU hospital or clinic.

Schaefer raised concern in his letter that the university could be violating state law if it is funding abortion services with taxpayer dollars. Schaefer called it an issue of "substantial public interest and concern." UMHC has yet to respond to KOMU 8 News about whether the university is using taxpayer dollars to pay Dr. McNicholas.

Schaefer, who serves as Chairman of the Senate Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life, said the committee's goal is to determine the legality of the Missouri Department of Health and Human Services issuing the facility a license to operate July 15. The facility began performing medication abortion services Aug. 1.

A representative for Planned Parenthood of Kansas and mid-Missouri said the Columbia clinic is only performing medication abortions.



## **Kendrick proposes new intern policies as House considers harassment issues**

By Rudi Keller

Monday, August 17, 2015 at 2:00 pm

A new policy to govern interns in the Missouri House should ban all sexual behavior, welcome or unwelcome, between lawmakers or paid staff and interns, state Rep. Kip Kendrick said Monday.

Kendrick, D-Columbia, is part of a nine-member group assigned to study House policies governing sexual harassment after a scandal led to House Speaker John Diehl to resign in May. Kendrick wrote proposed changes to House policy, intended to prohibit consensual as well as unwanted behavior involving interns, and sent the draft to other members of the task force in July.

Diehl resigned after publication of sexually suggestive text messages he exchanged with a 19-year-old intern from Missouri Southern State University.

That relationship shows any new policy needs to go beyond refinements to sexual harassment policies already in place, Kendrick said.

“It is essentially a nonfraternization policy, with no sexual or romantic conduct with any intern, or staff under their supervision, whether the relationship is consensual or not and regardless of who initiates behavior,” Kendrick said. “It really is the power differential that I am trying to address, the power dynamic.”

After Diehl resigned, the office of Sen. Paul LeVota, D-Independence, was scrutinized for allegations of sexual harassment of a University of Central Missouri intern. LeVota resigned

after the UCM inquiry into Title IX violations concluded he made unwanted sexual advances and engaged in retaliation after he was rebuffed.

The study group, led by Rep. Kevin Engler, R-Farmington, has not met since it was appointed in May by House Speaker Todd Richardson, R-Poplar Bluff. Engler said Monday that he presented ideas he has developed to the House Republican Caucus when it met in July.

A written version was recently sent to Chief Clerk Adam Crumbliss for distribution among House members to obtain feedback, Engler said.

“We have been a clearinghouse,” he said of the study group. “I told the caucus that ‘Here are things we need to address’ and asked ‘What would you have problems with, what would you expand and what do we do with interns not going through a college system?’”

His proposals include designating an ombudsman who can hear complaints confidentially and give advice so interns feel comfortable that they are being protected, Engler said. The ombudsman could arrange a new work assignment or initiate an investigation, depending on the wishes of the victim, he said.

“We just have to make it easier for an intern who has any problems or misgivings to speak up and have a vetting process that is above reproach,” Engler said.

The draft might be revised into policies for the House to adopt at the upcoming veto session on Sept. 16, Engler said. If it is not ready by then, it should be in place for the 2016 session, he said.

Kendrick is a freshman legislator who completed his first session in May. New House members need training that emphasizes their role as mentors and their Title IX responsibilities to protect student interns from sexual harassment and discrimination, Kendrick said.

**With Columbia College, Stephens College and the University of Missouri in his district, the issue is a top priority for him, Kendrick said.**

Whatever policies are adopted should have bipartisan support, Kendrick said.

“This is not a Republican or Democratic issue,” he said. “We all need to own the problem, and we all need to solve it.”

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## Six local fraternities missing required sprinkler systems given extension

RILEY BEGGIN, 8 hrs ago

**COLUMBIA — MU fraternities that have not yet installed a fire sprinkler system will have until the end of the spring semester to comply, the Columbia City Council decided on Monday.**

**The City Council passed a law in 2008 that required all fraternities and sororities in Columbia to have sprinkler systems. A March 16 deadline to meet those requirements is approaching, and six fraternities haven't complied.**

**Two of those fraternities, Delta Tau Delta and Sigma Nu, have asked the city for extensions on the sprinkler requirement in order to build new houses. The Columbia Fire Department outlined three options to the Columbia City Council: grant a one-year extension of the deadline, grant a three-year extension of the deadline while checking "measurable benchmarks," or do nothing and allow the non-compliant fraternities to lose their occupancy permits.**

The City Council decided to extend the deadline until June 1, 2016, though they haven't yet voted on an ordinance to do so. After June 1, fraternities that still have not complied will have to contact the Columbia Fire Department to discuss individually tailored plans to get the houses up to compliance, Fire Chief Randy White said.

"The onus is on each of you to show us why you need an extension," Mayor Bob McDavid said of the non-compliant fraternities. "We want to make sure they know we mean business," Third Ward Councilman Karl Skala said.

Sigma Nu requested an extension until the end of the spring semester in order to begin construction on a new \$6 million house. The fraternity's house corporation president, Doug Hacker, said that it would cost over \$100,000 to replace the sprinkler system for the three-month period. The residents would have to find alternative housing mid-March to meet the deadline, Hacker said.

"We already have fire alarms and smoke detectors, and we're completely up to code, but the code changes mid-next year," Hacker said. "It's not a matter of cost; it's just a matter of timing."

Delta Tau Delta requested three more years to raise enough money to build a new house that would include a sprinkler system, said Breck Anderson, the fraternity's house corporation officer. Anderson said the organization has recently reduced its debt from \$900,000 to \$700,000 and would have to borrow between \$150,000 and \$300,000 more to install a new sprinkler system in the current house.

"We have been working for the last five years to start a capital campaign to build a new house," Anderson said. "It takes quite a long time for a volunteer group like we have to be able to get that all together."

Assistant Fire Chief Brad Fraizer said the Columbia Fire Department has been communicating with all of the fraternities and sororities about the requirements during the past seven years.

Sprinkler systems are "the quickest way to put out a fire and conserve property," Fraizer said. "They go further toward life saving than any other method."

A freshman member of the MU Sigma Chi fraternity died in a house fire in 1999, and there were other fatal fires in fraternities and sororities around the country in the following years. These deaths prompted the Columbia City Council to create the sprinkler requirement.

As of July 31, four other fraternities, Kappa Alpha, Theta Chi, Lambda Chi Alpha and Acacia also had not installed sprinkler systems.

# THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

## Can Universities Fix the Police?

August 18, 2015  
By Steve Kolowich

### NO MU MENTION

**O**n a Sunday evening in July, Robin S. Engel was watching her daughter's basketball game when her phone rang. It was the police.

A man had just been shot, an assistant chief of the Cincinnati Police Department told her. It happened near the University of Cincinnati, where Ms. Engel worked as a professor of criminal justice. The shooter was a university police officer.

The professor's phone beeped. It was another city police commander, this time a district captain, who also wanted to keep Ms. Engel in the loop. Before long, she learned about the victim. His name was Samuel DuBose. He was 43 years old, black, and unarmed. And he was dead.

Ms. Engel is not part of the chain of command. She has never sworn an oath or patrolled a beat. And yet, on a night when a white officer gunned down an unarmed black man during a traffic stop, an incident that was bound to draw national scrutiny, two Cincinnati police commanders went out of their way to call an academic. Why?

"Because," she explained, "we're partners."

The police are a divisive force. Mr. DuBose's fatal traffic stop was the latest in a string of vividly documented incidents in which unarmed minority citizens either have been killed by the police or have died in police custody.

Some academics have joined in protesting police brutality and calling for greater accountability. Others have chosen to study the police at a critical distance, dissecting the long arm of the law with the impious detachment of a pathologist.

Ms. Engel is part of a small but influential group of researchers who have taken a different tack, one they believe gives them a better chance of fixing the problems their peers merely study: They are working with the police.

**F**rom her post at the University of Cincinnati, Ms. Engel has played a key role in the city's efforts to reduce violent crime for the better part of a decade. When city leaders were desperate to rein in crime in the mid-2000s, Ms. Engel used her academic training to help the police figure out exactly where the violence was coming from. She advised them on strategies for stemming it and ran analyses to figure out how well those tactics were working.

"For decades, research on the police has provided little 'real-world' value," wrote Ms. Engel in a 2010 paper with James T. Whalen, an assistant chief of the Cincinnati police. "The truth is most academics know so little of the idiosyncrasies and politics operating within police agencies that their recommendations are often difficult, if not impossible, to implement."

The Cincinnati criminologist is not the only academic who has teamed up with law enforcement officials. Jerry Ratcliffe, a professor of criminal justice at Temple University, has collaborated with the Philadelphia police to design field experiments testing the effects of different policing strategies.

In the summer of 2009, Mr. Ratcliffe randomly assigned officers to walk around neighborhoods that had clocked high rates of homicides, assaults, and robberies happening in the open. After three months, he compared the crime reports in those neighborhoods to those in comparably dangerous areas that officers had not patrolled on foot.

The foot patrols resulted in the police making thousands more stops and hundreds more arrests, while preventing about 50 violent crimes, according to Mr. Ratcliffe.

The professor published a paper on that experiment in *Criminology*, a top journal in his field. But he also wrote up a shorter, less jargony version and made it available to law-enforcement officials.

Journals like *Criminology* are read by other academics, says Mr. Ratcliffe, but not by the people who dictate how the police operate.

Anthony A. Braga, a professor of criminal justice at Rutgers University, has worked for years with the Boston Police Department as an "embedded criminologist," including a stint as chief policy adviser to Commissioner Edward F. Davis. Mr. Braga says that his working inside the Boston police has made officials there take his research seriously.

Academics who want to have pull with police officials must "maintain 'real-time' knowledge of current events, whether significant crimes, arrests, or political maneuvering inside and outside the department," according to a 2014 paper the Rutgers professor cowrote with Mr. Davis. Otherwise, "it is very difficult to be credible in strategy meetings."

The police don't always listen, says Mr. Braga. The politics of law enforcement often favor short-term payoffs, not long-term studies — making arrests and getting guns off the street, rather than figuring out how the guns got there in the first place, he says. And commanders sometimes misinterpret research findings to confirm their existing strategies.

Then there's the question of objectivity. When Mr. Braga was hired as a policy adviser, he became an employee of the Boston Police Department. The professor insists he was an honest broker for the commissioner. By way of evidence, he points to — what else — an academic study, which he cowrote, that did "not find any

support" for the view that researchers who help design law-enforcement programs are "pressured to report positive results."

Ms. Engel came to a similar conclusion in Cincinnati. "It's not as though, because I'm a partner on the team, I'm a cheerleader," she says. "I'm not. I'm a critical voice, still, but I'm a critical voice with context."

**C**huck Wexler, executive director of a Washington think tank called the Police Executive Research Forum, considers himself a "person of the '60s." As an undergraduate at Boston University he participated in protests against the Vietnam War until he was turned off at the sight of demonstrators throwing bottles at the police. But he wanted to make a difference in the world.

So in 1974, after getting a master's degree in criminology at Florida State University, Mr. Wexler returned to Boston and joined the Boston Police Department as an intern.

He also enrolled in a doctoral program in urban studies and planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Non-sworn and highly educated, he was a rarity for the department at the time. The 1960s had driven a wedge between colleges and law enforcement. Police officers had often stood athwart the activists fighting for causes that enjoyed a lot of support in higher education. Researchers had turned their gaze to police corruption, discrimination, and other abuses of power. If officers found themselves knocking on the doors of the ivory tower, it typically wasn't for advice on how to do their jobs. And the police didn't routinely throw open their own doors to researchers.

"If you were lucky you could find a police department that would let you come in to do a particular piece of research," says Charles Wellford, an emeritus professor of criminology at the University of Maryland at College Park. But you didn't expect them to change their operations based on your findings.

After a few years with the Boston police, Mr. Wexler was put in charge of something called the "community disorders unit," which helped officers parse the racial dynamics of crime in a city that was struggling to desegregate. "We had to get police officers to realize that a family that moved into a home and had racial epithets spray-painted on their house, or their tires slashed — that wasn't simply an act of vandalism," he says.

He remembers sending a black officer and a white officer, both undercover, into a bar known for discriminating against black customers. "It sort of came out of my appreciation for research — sending people in, and controlling on one variable like race," he says. Sure enough, the black officer was denied service. Mr. Wexler videotaped the whole thing. "We used that tape to go after their liquor license," he says.

Still, the MIT graduate student sensed a gulf between his work in Boston and his studies in Cambridge that was wider than the river running between the cities.

Years later, a British researcher named Barry MacDonald would describe conversations between academics and the police as a "dialogue of the deaf." Each side rendered the other in caricature: Academics were haughty idealists with little appreciation for crime-fighting. Police officers were thin-skinned soldiers with little capacity for critical thinking. They tended to talk past each other.

"University culture and police culture are very different," says Mr. Wexler. "And I think the really effective people in this world, researchers or police chiefs, really understand each other's culture and manage to find a way to navigate the rules of engagement."

He was not alone. In 1970, the Ford Foundation spent \$30-million to create the Police Foundation to push departments toward a more scientific approach to policing. That led to the creation, in 1976, of the Police Executive Research Forum, a membership group aimed at improving conversations between researchers and degree-holding law-enforcement professionals.

It worked. Over the next four decades, academic researchers and police departments collaborated on numerous studies and field experiments. They tested the effectiveness of drug education, prisoner-reentry programs, and gun buybacks, as well as different approaches to responding to domestic-violence calls and cooling down violent-crime "hot spots." The research forum, which now has 2,200 members, is preparing for an experiment in Arlington, Tex., to study how officers behave when they are wearing body cameras.

"The issue of research is really important in policing," says Mr. Wexler. "It's the way we learn and progress."

**A**nd yet to those mistreated by the police, it often seems as if nothing has changed. The events of the last year have bolstered the view that the police, for all their self-study, still have a serious race problem. Officer training was very much on Ms. Engel's mind after Mr. DuBose's death. She emailed her contacts in police-research circles to ask who had the best training program for helping police navigate the murky waters of race, bias, and enforcement.

More than one person responded with the same name: Lorie Fridell.

Ms. Fridell is an associate professor of criminology at the University of South Florida and a former research director of the Police Executive Research Forum. These days she specializes in making police officers reckon with their biases.

The professor's consulting company, called Fair and Impartial Policing, holds training courses that draw on psychology research to teach officers about the inevitability of bias, especially racial bias, and how to avoid letting it affect their work. She is determined to push the conversation between the police and their critics in a more enlightened direction.

"Our discussion in this country, certainly since the issue re-emerged in the late 1990s, is to assume that bias in policing is produced by officers with explicit bias — which is like a racist," says Ms. Fridell. But the professor believes that most officers are well-intentioned.

Her company's training programs focus on "implicit bias": the kind that people don't know they have. Psychology research suggests this kind of bias is common, says Ms. Fridell. In the workshops, trainers explain the findings of some of those studies and encourage the officers to grapple with their own subterranean prejudices.

Tact is key. "When we walk into a group to train, generally we're walking into a room of people who are somewhere between defensive and hostile," says Ms. Fridell. But once they start hearing about the science of implicit bias — how it's a human flaw that affects even the well-intentioned — the officers tend to open up, says the professor. By design, the trainers who lead the workshops are always fellow officers.

Demand for her company's services has increased in recent years, especially since the Ferguson protests. Ms. Fridell's trainers have been called in to educate officers in St. Louis County, Las Vegas, Detroit, and elsewhere.

"There were many dedicated chiefs and sheriffs out there who were looking for, quote, the right answer," she says.

Is anti-bias training the right answer? Police officials hope so. But it is hard to know if bringing officers up to speed on psychology research can change the dynamics of law enforcement in neighborhoods where the cops are seen as just as dangerous as the criminals.

Last year, the Baltimore Police Department put hundreds of its officers through workshops developed by Fair and Impartial Policing, according to The Baltimore Sun. In January, Ms. Fridell's team returned to train department leaders.

Then, in April, a 25-year-old black man named Freddie Gray was dragged wailing into the back of a police van. He was soon dead of a mysterious spinal-cord injury he suffered while in police custody. His death sparked protests, leading to clashes with the police, injuries, looting, hundreds of arrests, and a near-total implosion of relations between local law enforcement and the black residents of West Baltimore.

The anti-bias workshops had been a good step in theory. But against decades of fear and frustration they may have been merely academic.

"The concerns on the part of the community members in Baltimore, similar to the complaints we heard in Ferguson, were of abusive policing," Ms. Fridell says. "Abusive policing is inherently biased."

In other words, training may help "well intentioned" officers do their jobs, but it may be hard to reach others who are not receptive to discussions of implicit bias. "I don't believe that officers who are at war with the community are going to be changed by our training," she says.

**S**everal weeks after Mr. DuBose's death, the president of the University of Cincinnati promoted Ms. Engel to vice president for safety and reform. Part of her new job is to oversee an inquiry to the university's police force and to figure out what changes should be made. Ms. Engel says she wants to "better understand the training that our officers have and whether or not it's sufficient." She says she has been in touch with Ms. Fridell.

But research and education can only do so much to keep the peace.

Ms. Engel did not just cultivate data when she worked with the Cincinnati Police Department. She also cultivated relationships — not just within the department but also with local politicians, church leaders, and other influential figures.

In the aftermath of Mr. DuBose's death she worked the phones, asking those community leaders to help keep the peace while the city police investigated the incident. Two days after the shooting, she and the university police chief sat down with members of the DuBose family, who were heartbroken and confused. "It was heart-wrenching," says Ms. Engel. "There's just no other way to describe it."

All the research in the world cannot give police departments control over every interaction between its officers and citizens, she says. And it takes only one Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, or Samuel DuBose to remind people where the police stand relative to their own senses of safety and justice.

"You work not just with the numbers, but with the community," says the professor, "so, when the bad incident happens, you have trust."