MU leadership responds to Florida shooting

BY STEN SPINELLA

MU will print enough tip sheets on how to respond to active shooters to put one in every classroom and office space on campus.

Chancellor Alexander Cartwright on Tuesday emailed students, faculty and staff a response to the killing of 17 people last week at a Parkland, Florida, high school.

Cartwright’s email, also signed by MU Vice Chancellor of Operations Gary Ward, MU Police Chief Doug Schwandt and UM System President Mun Choi, led with condolences for those affected by the Parkland shooting and then advised students and staff how to behave if there were an active shooter on campus.

University advice

Cartwright linked to the Department of Homeland Security’s active shooter response tip sheet, adding: “Tip sheets will be provided for each classroom and office space at the university.”

MU spokeswoman Liz McCune said the tip sheets will be printed and distributed to each of the four UM System campuses.

“They’re still assessing how many total will be needed,” McCune said. “The president’s office has reached out to each of the campuses to see how many they need.”

There also were links in the email to an active shooter training video from the city of Houston and the Department of Homeland Security, and MU’s own “Surviving an Active Shooter” video. After asking recipients to engage with these three sources, the email suggested people act in one of three ways in an active shooter situation: Run, hide or fight.
“Getting away from the shooter or shooters is the top priority,” the email read. “Leave your things behind and run away. If safe to do so, warn others nearby. When you are in a safe place, call 911 to report what you have seen. Be ready to describe the shooter or shooters, their locations and weapons.”

The email suggested hiding as a second option if unable to escape. It advised completely silencing electronic devices, locking doors and closing blinds if possible and turning off lights. It advised that people refrain from hiding in groups and to remain where they are until law enforcement tells you what to do.

The third option, to fight, is a “last resort,” according to the email. The objective in that case is to “act decisively and aggressively to stop the shooter” and to “distract and disarm the shooter if you can by using makeshift weapons such as chairs, fire extinguishers, scissors and books.”

Cartwright’s email also discussed situational awareness, staying away from campus if informed of an active shooter, and paying attention to updates from campus safety officials until an “All Clear” alert is made.

The email contained contact information for Sgt. Jennifer Perry of the MU Police Department for those who want the MUPD’s free active shooter survival and self-defense training courses.

Preparing for the worst

The Columbia Police and Fire departments and the University of Missouri Ambulance Service are teaming with Stephens College to “practice preparedness for an active assailant event” from 6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 28, according to a news release.

Stephens spokeswoman Rebecca Kline noted the exercise was scheduled before the Parkland shooting, but said the tragedy highlights the importance of the drill.

“I just heard Columbine is about to hit its 20th anniversary,” Kline said. “We live in a world where any large gathering of people can be a target. Knowing that we are a home away from home for students around the country, anything we can do to protect their safety does take on a special significance.”

The event, which is closed to citizens and students, is meant to assess the ability of responders if an assailant were to attack. This means measuring proficiency in communication and action among police officers, as well as “local response agencies’ ability to effectively triage, treat and transport all people in need within the affected area,” the news release said.
The drill also will evaluate agencies ability to get information out to the public.

“These events unfortunately can happen in any community,” Brad Fraizer, assistant fire chief for the Columbia Fire Department, said. “We train on a variety of emergency response scenarios. It’s always good to train with other agencies working on a large-scale event such as an active shooter.”

Pedestrians and students will likely witness the drill — police officers, the Police Department’s SWAT, Crisis Negotiation teams and EMTs will all be in the area. Part of East Walnut Street between Ripley Street and College Avenue, and part of Ripley Street between East Walnut and East Broadway streets, will be closed beginning at 5 p.m.

Fraizer said MU police likely are not involved because Stephens College is outside their jurisdiction. In November 2016, the MU Police Department was among nine local agencies that participated in an active assailant exercise on the MU campus.

A corps of 20 Stephens College Theatre Art students will be in makeup as “role-players” for the Feb. 28 drill, and several staff members have volunteered to participate.

“First of all, we’re happy to just be of service to the community,” Kline said. “We have a space that’s perfect for that sort of thing. When our first responders get better, we’re all safer here in Columbia.”

The Russians (and Other Online Outlaws) Are Coming

By Ellen de Graffenreid

A study just published in Strategic Studies Quarterly outlining how Russian social media trolls and bots targeted the University of Missouri and spread false information intended to create chaos and divide the campus, state and nation hits close to home for me.
The findings explain, in part, why November 2015 was the most difficult month in my 20-year career in higher education. I was vice chancellor for marketing and communications at the University of Missouri. Concerned Student 1950, an African-American student group, had issued a list of demands to the university administration related to campus climate issues. One member of the group announced a hunger strike, vowing not to eat until the university system president, Timothy Wolfe, resigned. Many deans at the flagship campus were lobbying the Board of Curators to force Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin to step down. Then the football team issued a statement of support for Concerned Student 1950.

A team of faculty members, administrators and students were developing a list of solutions that Mizzou would begin implementing to improve campus climate (a platform later adopted by the university system), but that plan had not yet been approved for broad communication to the campus community. Rumors were flying on social media, and our communications team was working around the clock. Their close partners in the university police department were doing everything they could to address rumors and communicate accurate information as quickly as possible.

What we didn’t know until well into the crisis was that we were the target of deliberate manipulation. Looking back from 2018, it may be unsurprising that fake social media accounts and bots initiated in Russia would be used to target a trending crisis at a flagship university in the middle of the United States. At the time, the idea would have sounded like a conspiracy theory from late-night talk radio.

That’s not to say that we were naïve. We knew that we were the target of some discussion on boards associated with the dark web and that some fake social accounts were claiming to be Mizzou students. They posted inflammatory claims about what was happening on campus, which were quickly shared by students, faculty members, parents and people in the community, so we began asking our constituents not to share unconfirmed reports.

But while we knew there were some bad actors, we were unaware of the scope, extent and source of the misinformation campaign intended to create fear, panic and discord. Reports of pickup trucks with Confederate flags, police marching with KKK members and other inflammatory incidents were amplified by terrified community members, but our police department wasn’t able to verify them with eyewitness accounts. As campus communicators, we could say that we couldn’t confirm that these things happened, but with multiple audiences with widely variable points of view, absence of evidence wasn’t evidence of absence.

Anonymous social media platforms, particularly Yik Yak, complicated matters. A threat of violence against African-American students, reported to the university police department, prompted a rapid and full-scale investigation. With the cooperation of Yik Yak, the police quickly located the individual responsible. The following morning, I found myself calling my counterpart to give that campus leadership team notice that one of their students was being arrested before it hit the media. This chain of events underscored that we had to take every rumor seriously.
As a communicator, I believe in evaluating crisis response after the fact, but I also try hard not to second-guess crisis communications decisions. It is easy to critique your actions in retrospect because you can’t remember what you knew when and lose your perspective on the experience of operating in a highly charged environment. In other words, decisions are made prospectively, but critique is retrospective. Today, when there is a broad investigation of potential Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election and fake news is on everyone’s mind, it seems perfectly credible that Mizzou was a target in 2015. But at the time, nobody would have believed us if the official university statements blamed fake Russian social media accounts and internet bots for ramping up fear and discord on our campus.

Lieutenant Colonel Jarred Prier, the author of the study, is correct that anyone who was looking knew that there were outside actors capitalizing on a crisis to sow fear and chaos. We knew that there were fake accounts out there, but communicating any specifics to a broader audience was not a strategy that would have contributed to building trust. Students, citizens and legislators who wanted to hold the university accountable for combating racism and ensuring student safety would have said we were passing the buck.

My former colleague and director of the news bureau at Mizzou, Christian Basi, is right when he says establishing and publicizing the trusted sources of information and moving quickly are more important now than ever. In practice, this can be incredibly difficult when trust has broken down, and given the time it takes to verify facts in fast-moving and highly variable situations. I would add that we need to be in close contact with experts studying the online misinformation trends, and with law enforcement who work to combat these kinds of online threats.

I wish I had known in November 2015 what we have since learned about the extent to which our perceptions can be shaped by fake content created by outside actors and the tactics they use to manipulate public perception. What I can do now is continually educate myself and the leaders with whom I work about these tactics and their potential consequences. Those of us on campuses should familiarize ourselves with the tactics that purveyors of fake news use, check Google’s image search to find out where images are coming from -- often a quick tell for fake content -- and continually remind our constituents where they can go to get help and what resources our campuses offers in a crisis.

Colleges and universities must learn all we can about the nature and extent of this threat to our mission, campus safety and reputation. Simply put, higher education and local law enforcement currently do not have the resources or trained personnel to detect fake content campaigns. Many institutions still do not have a full-time staff member monitoring and managing social media. In addition to working with local, state and national authorities when universities are targeted by outside groups, higher education leaders must make combating this phenomenon a strategic priority and attempt to address it in a coordinated way through our advocacy organizations and professional associations. Without a coordinated effort, it is likely that outside actors will continue to exact a heavy toll on our campuses during any kind of crisis.
Editorial: Russian meddling preys on a gullible public

By Hank Waters

In an excellent report published in this newspaper last Sunday, Rudi Keller explained what he learned from several researchers about recent Russian meddling in U.S. affairs using social media. Keller’s primary source was Lt. Col. Jarred Prier, who for years has studied Russian cyber warfare and recently wrote a peer-reviewed report including student protests at the University of Missouri as an example.

Prier says Russian disinformation campaigns seek to sow discord among allies of the U.S. and internally as well. Particularly galling to Prier, a 2003 MU grad, was the successful Russian effort to stoke unfounded fears of a violent white backlash surrounding 2015 student protests and subsequent resignation of then-UM President Tim Wolfe.

Prier found Russian cyber trolls used Twitter to spread untrue accounts of campus violence, including Ku Klux Klan marches and a phony picture of a battered black youth. Incessant repetition on social media caused many to believe the false reports.

The recent indictment by Special Counsel Robert Mueller charges Russia used its campaign in the 2016 presidential campaign to benefit Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Bernie Sanders in order to discredit Democrat Hillary Clinton, thought by the Russians to be their main target.

Larger conclusions by Prier and other expert witnesses interviewed by Keller are interesting. Prier says “They want to force the American public to go over into a corner and argue amongst themselves.”

MU Professor of political science Cooper Drury says the Russian long-term goal is not the victory of any political party but a weaker U.S. If disruption is your goal, says Drury, “then the greater polarization you can get inside a democracy the more successful you will be.”

MU professor of communications Mitchell McKinney says social media helps mask the source of otherwise questionable propaganda, and volume creates believability. Then, he says, most success comes when these rumors are reported by trusted news organization.

“These Russian trolls were driving clicks,” says Prier. “Clicks are what keeps the business moving.”
If political polarization in the U.S. is a primary goal we might think the Russian campaign has been spectacularly successful, but MU professor Drury points out that traditional media once considered neutral is more likely today to take sides. He cites television networks Fox News and MSNBC which attract opposed and mutually disdainful audiences.

Prier’s report sounds pessimistic, but MU journalism professor Mike Kearney argues the internet makes it easier for each of us to share and find information “by ourselves.” Prier says it’s up to providers of information, including Twitter, to be more careful.

Obviously, the first line of defense should be the retail consumer of news, but as we see in the new age of easy disinformation, we have not yet fully learned that skill. A gullible public has existed since the first human society appeared. Today the same human frailty persists, frighteningly fueled by the internet and its latest, most insidious tool, Twitter.

Yes, I will say “insidious.” The benefit of sharing innocuous messages is sadly overcome by the pernicious opportunities gained by newly empowered trolls who so easily get in our heads anonymously. Will we learn to be skeptical enough?

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Developer to resubmit Missouri Bluffs subdivision plan with changes

By Mark Schlinkmann

ST. CHARLES COUNTY • A proposed subdivision on the edge of the Missouri Bluffs Golf Course is on hold to give county officials more time to review what the developers' attorney called "significant revisions" they are making to the plan.

As a result, the issue has been removed from the agenda for the Wednesday night meeting of the county Planning and Zoning Commission.

Brad Goss, an attorney for NT Home Builders LLC, on Monday withdrew the firm's application but said the company would be back with another one "relatively soon."

Among other things, Goss said, the revised plan would add sidewalks along streets throughout the development. Proposed changes, he said, also include a reduction in multi-family lots.

"If we appeared at the hearing on (Wednesday), the commission and staff would only have been given a little over a week to consider the revised plan," Goss said in the withdrawal letter.
NT, headed by developer Greg Whittaker, had proposed building 315 single-family homes and up to 120 attached units near the golf club.

The land, owned by the University of Missouri, is near the university's research park near Highway 94 and Highway 40 (Interstate 64).

The plan has drawn opposition from some boosters of the nearby Katy Trail who contend that it would mar the landscape and detract from the experience of bicyclists and walkers.

Whittaker says the area's atmosphere wouldn't be adversely affected and that the whole point of the project is to blend into the surroundings and to preserve much of the forested, hilly terrain.

Goss said his client also withdrew the original plan after an attorney for one of the companies in the research park questioned the adequacy of the original notice given by the county about the issue.

Goss said "we believe the notice was adequate" but that "we desire that there be no question" regarding it.

More than a hashtag: 'Me Too' founder Tarana Burke speaks at MU

BY KATHRYN PALMER

Tarana Burke, the founder of the Me Too movement, has a message for survivors of sexual abuse: “Don’t think you have to put up a hashtag. It’s your story to own.”

An audience of over 200 students, faculty, staff and Columbia locals packed a room in Tate Hall to hear Burke, the keynote speaker for MU’s Black History Month events, speak about how the Me Too movement started and to learn how they can take action against sexual violence on campus and in their communities. Burke said there is value in the hashtag based on the movement she started.

#MeToo is “the start of a journey. It’s permission to start your healing journey,” said Burke, who is a survivor of sexual violence and now serves as the senior director of the nonprofit Girls for Gender Equity.
The founding of #MeToo

Although #MeToo didn’t go viral until October, the Me Too movement is more than a decade old and is rooted in Burke’s lifelong commitment to organizing for change.

In 2006, Burke founded Just Be Inc., a nonprofit providing resources for sexual abuse victims, with an emphasis on helping communities of color. She coined “Me Too” as the organization’s watchword.

“I know I can tell little black and brown girls that they are beautiful, but they go out into a world that tells them the opposite,” said Burke, who said she focuses on building up a sense of self-worth in marginalized communities.

For Burke, the phrase “Me Too” is deeply personal. In 1997, when she was 22 years old, she was working as a youth counselor in Selma, Alabama, when a young girl confided in Burke that her mother’s boyfriend was abusing her. But Burke, who had yet to come to terms with her own experiences, shuffled the girl off to another counselor.

“The thing I wanted to say so badly to her was ‘this happened to me too,’” Burke said, “but it didn’t feel like enough.”

Over the next several years, Burke continued to listen to the stories of women and girls who had experienced the same trauma she had, and she asked herself: “What is the thing that I needed at that age?” ... I needed empathy. I needed someone who heard me and saw me. ... that’s how ‘Me Too’ was born.”

She founded Just Be Inc. to meet that need. She created a Myspace page for it and soon witnessed women — and men, she emphasized — coming forward with their stories.

But then on Oct. 15, 2017, Burke woke up to see the now-famous hashtag flooding social media after actress Alyssa Milano urged women to use #MeToo as a means of publicizing their experiences with sexual assault.

At first, Burke said she was “in full-on panic.”

“I felt like my life’s work was in jeopardy.” she said to the crowd. “We’ve seen black women’s work get erased time and time again.”
Although Milano soon credited Burke, a new question emerged: Why did it take a swell of well-connected white women, such as Ashley Judd, Jennifer Lawrence and Angelina Jolie, telling their stories to fast-track the national conversation on sexual assault?

The answer lies in the deep-seated racial mores of American life, said Stephanie Shonekan, chair of the Black Studies Department at MU and lead organizer of Tuesday night’s event.

“When we talk about the ‘damsel in distress,’ you’re not going to see a picture of a black woman. You’re going to see a picture of a white woman,” Shonekan said. “Society has consistently been more comfortable listening to white women than it has been listening to black women.”

But Burke said that after a few hours of seeing people come forward under the banner of #MeToo, her “panic shifted from ‘what’s going to happen to my work,’ to ‘what’s going to happen to those people?’”

She asked herself: “Am I going to be in conflict or in service? I made a decision. I have to be in service.”

And that’s the reality some of the women sitting in the auditorium on Tuesday face everyday.

Nikki McGruder has seen this play out in her role as the regional manager of the Diversity Awareness Partnership in Boone County. She said that even though she has been working in her position for three years and delivers regular talks on discrimination, “it’s amazing how experts come in and people believe them more.”

“Is it because I’m black?” she said. “Is it because I’m a woman? Is it because I’m a black woman?”

Although McGruder acknowledges the role race played in the eruption of #MeToo, she brought her two daughters, 9-year-old Lyric and 5-year-old Aria, to hear Burke speak because she thinks it’s critical for them to know about sexual violence and not be afraid to talk about it.

“We’re in a season of change,” McGruder said.

While statistics show that women of color and transgender people are at greater risk of sexual assault, Burke’s address made clear that it is a far-reaching social problem not limited by race or even gender: One in six women and one in every 33 men in the U.S. will experience rape or
attempted rape in their lifetime, according to a report from the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network.

Shonekan’s idea to bring Burke to campus garnered the support of MU’s Black History Month Committee; the Division of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity; Women’s and Gender Studies; and the Women’s Center, the co-sponsors of the event.

#MeToo and Mizzou

Burke, who has been on a nationwide speaking tour since the explosion of #MeToo, pointed out the particular problem college campuses, such as MU, face with sexual assault.

College-age students, ages 18-24, are the group at highest risk of sexual violence, according to a 2017 report released by MU’s recently formed Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Task Force.

Joan Hermsen, chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies Department and co-chair of the task force, noted programs at MU such as the Relationship and the Sexual Violence Prevention Center and the It’s on Us and Green Dot programs play a role in prevention.

Ahead of Burke’s speech, Hermsen said she hopes Burke’s discussion of the movement at MU “contributes to campus conversations about consent and power.”

“But the institutional efforts to create a safer campus must be ongoing,” Hermsen said.

Burke stressed to the auditorium filled with young, internet-savvy students, though, that change doesn’t happen online.

“You have to be committed to changing the school’s culture,” she said as she called for “a zero tolerance of rape culture” on campus.

Katie Williams, 22, a women’s and gender studies major at MU, is one of those students Burke’s message might have already reached. Williams said she’s been active in preventing sexual violence on campus since her freshman year and strives to become a social worker.

Burke closed her address with a call to action for those looking to change the conversation on sexual violence.

“If y’all are ready to do that work,” she said, “I can only leave you with two words: Me too.”
Terrence Phillips no longer part of Missouri basketball team

By Dave Matter

COLUMBIA, MO. • Before he stepped foot on Mizzou’s campus in 2015, Terrence Phillips was greeted as the new leader of the men’s basketball program. His charismatic, engaging personality was seen as a refreshing addition to the team as coach Kim Anderson attempted to remake a roster that was constantly turning over with a flood of transfers coming and going during the Frank Haith regime.

Less than three years later, Phillips is the latest departure from the roster. Last month, Phillips was suspended indefinitely when the school’s Title IX office launched an investigation against the junior guard after receiving complaints from at least four women, alleging physical abuse, stalking and nonconsensual recording of a sexual encounter. As of Tuesday, Phillips was no longer a member of the Missouri program, a team spokesman confirmed. Phillips was taken off Mizzou’s online roster Tuesday. The team had no further comment on Phillips’ situation before Tuesday’s game against Ole Miss.

Phillips, a two-year starter who had moved to the bench this season, was suspended indefinitely from the team Jan. 26, shortly after one alleged victim received a notice from Mizzou’s Title IX office that her complaint was under review.

On Jan. 29, another alleged victim agreed to let the Title IX office include her initial witness statement, plus text messages and photos from Phillips as part of the investigation, she later told the Post-Dispatch. Two other alleged witnesses have told the Post-Dispatch they filed complaints against Phillips with the Title IX office, which investigates issues of sex discrimination and sexual violence on campus. Phillips is still listed as enrolled at MU in the online student database. He did not respond to interview requests Tuesday.

Privacy laws prevent MU from disclosing information about open investigations. In an interview last week, Mizzou athletics director Jim Sterk talked at length about the department’s push to “create a safe atmosphere” on campus.

“You get 30,000 students here and you’re going to get some folks who maybe shouldn’t be here,” Sterk said Tuesday in his Mizzou Arena office. “The quicker you weed those folks out, the better. But, also, what are the things you do to make the environment as safe as it can be?”
In two-plus seasons at Mizzou, Phillips started 54 of 83 games, averaged 7.6 points and 3.4 assists per game, which ranks eighth all-time in team history. After averaging 28 minutes as a sophomore, he was only playing 10 minutes per game this season before his suspension and averaged 2.5 points and 1.5 assists in his reduced role.

For the last four weeks the Tigers have been down to eight scholarship players and especially thin in the backcourt. Freshman guard C.J. Roberts left the team in December and transferred to Texas Tech. Freshman guard Blake Harris, who moved into the starting lineup two weeks into the season, transferred to North Carolina State in early January. Then came Phillips’ suspension the day Mizzou was leaving Columbia for a game at Mississippi State. By then, first-year coach Cuonzo Martin had handed the ball-handling duties to graduate transfer Kassius Robertson and junior Jordan Geist.

Phillips’ departure officially opens another scholarship that Martin can use for next year’s roster. The Tigers signed three players in November and have room for at least two more additions during the spring signing period. That number could move to three if Michael Porter Jr. enters the NBA draft. Mizzou has filled one of those spots with Chicago point guard Xavier Pinson, a senior at Simeon Career Academy who gave the Tigers a verbal commitment earlier this month.

Phillips, a native of Orange County, Calif., came to Mizzou from Oak Hill Academy in Virginia and arrived more cultured than most teenage recruits having spent a year in Rome, where his older brother Brandon Jennings played professional before his NBA career began. Phillips quickly won over fans with his active social media presence — his Twitter handle reflected his leadership ambitions, @FloorGeneral — and became active on campus with organizations beyond the sphere of athletics.

“It helped my perspective on life in general,” Phillips said of his year in Italy. “I see the world completely different. I don’t see color or race and I get along with anyone.”

Once he came to campus, teammates and coaches talked about Phillips as the team leader before he played his first game. He fit the role naturally.

“Last year he was our leader as a freshman and some of the older guys didn’t like that,” former assistant coach Rob Fulford said in 2016, heading into Phillips’ sophomore season. “Now he’s got guys that he’s leading who want to be led.”

In the fall of 2016, Phillips was voted chair of the Southeastern Conference Men’s Basketball Leadership Council and represented Mizzou at the SEC Athletics Directors meeting in March 2017 and again at the SEC spring meetings later that summer. Last July he was one of five MU athletes chosen to attend the Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) and SEC Leadership Council in Birmingham, Ala. Over the holidays, he organized a local toy drive for needy children.

While maintaining his role as an ambassador for the program and Mizzou athletics, Phillips saw his role fluctuate as a sophomore, from starter to backup, from point guard to shooting guard. He was moved to the bench for nine games in the middle of the season before returning to the
starting lineup for the final 11 games. Phillips was among the team’s most outspoken fans of the Martin hire last March, and when Martin recruited Harris to compete for the point guard job, Phillips welcomed the addition.

“I feel perfectly comfortable” coming off the bench, Phillips said last fall. “I did it the second part of last season and it was probably the best I’ve played at Mizzou. At the end of the day it’s all about winning, no matter how many minutes you play or how many times you get in the game.”

Phillips off Missouri basketball team, spokesman confirms

By Cameron Teague-Robinson

Missouri junior point guard Terrence Phillips is no longer part of the Missouri men’s basketball program, a team spokesperson confirmed Tuesday.

Phillips was suspended indefinitely Jan. 26 and has not been part of team activities since that day. The team had no further comments on the situation.

On Jan. 29, news broke that Missouri’s Title IX office launched an investigation against Phillips.

Missouri coach Cuonzo Martin said at a Jan. 30 press conference that he found out about the investigation Jan. 26 before the team left for its game at Mississippi State.

“Probably 20 minutes before we were about to leave,” Martin said of when he was notified.

On Jan. 29, the Tribune received a copy of an email confirming the Title IX investigation from a complainant. The complainant, who agreed to speak to the Tribune on the condition of anonymity, said that they reported the case to the Title IX office last fall but then chose not to go forward with the investigation. The university chose to proceed with the case because additional women came forward, the complainant said.

Since then, the Tribune confirmed at least two other women that joined the Title IX investigation. Speaking to the Tribune on the condition of anonymity, one woman said her allegations were sexual in nature.
Before he was suspended, Phillips’ role diminished heavily from previous years. Phillips, who started 23 games last season and every game his freshman season, came off the bench in all 20 games this season.

Phillips never earned consistent minutes for the Tigers. Despite the transfer of freshman point guard Blake Harris and C.J. Roberts, whom Missouri planned to redshirt, Phillips averaged just 10 minutes and 2.5 points. Jordan Geist and Kassius Robertson took over most of the point-guard play.

Missouri (18-9, 8-6) has won five of its last seven games, without Phillips and will host Mississippi on Tuesday.

With Phillips off the team, Missouri will now have another scholarship it can use in its 2018 recruiting class. Missouri has already signed Torrance Watson, Javon Pickett and K.J. Santos and picked up a verbal commitment from Chicago point guard Xavier Pinson in January — leaving scholarships open.

**Phillips no longer a member of MU basketball program**

BY ALEC LEWIS

On Tuesday, just weeks after it became public that Terrence Phillips was being investigated by MU’s Title IX office, a team spokesman confirmed the junior point guard is no longer a member of the Missouri men’s basketball program.

First-year MU coach Cuonzo Martin has yet to comment on the news. He will presumably speak about the dismissal after Tuesday night’s home contest against Mississippi.

Back on Jan. 26, Phillips was suspended indefinitely from the basketball program. The team received word that the school’s Title IX office had launched an investigation into Phillips after multiple women came forward with allegations of physical abuse and other offenses.

The Title IX office investigates sexual discrimination and violence on campus.
Phillips — out of Orange County, California, and Oak Hill Academy — played in 20 games in this 2017-18 season. Before his suspension, he was averaging 2.5 points and 1.5 assists per game.

After playing two years for former Missouri coach Kim Anderson and starting 54 of his 83 games played at Missouri, Phillips’ role had decreased under Martin.

Without Phillips, the Tigers have played and will continue to play junior guard Jordan Geist and senior guard Kassius Robertson at the point guard position. The two have excelled through conference play and have helped lead Missouri to its record of 18-9 overall and 8-6 in the SEC.

Missouri point guard Terrence Phillips no longer part of basketball team

COLUMBIA, MO (KCTV/AP) -

Missouri basketball player Terrence Phillips is no longer a member of the program, according to reports.

The team announced Phillips’ indefinite suspension on last Friday after being investigated by university officials.

The University of Missouri-Columbia’s Title IX office that investigates allegations of sexual discrimination and violence said in an email that it is investigating Phillips. Both the Kansas City Star and St. Louis Post-Dispatch obtained a copy of the email.

The newspapers reported that the Title IX email was sent last Friday to an alleged victim.

The junior from Orange County, California, had been a back-up point guard for the Tigers this season after starting most of the previous two years.

Similar stories ran state wide
Mizzou's Sterk takes steps to ensure safe environment for athletes

By: Dave Matter

COLUMBIA, MO. • On Feb. 5, Missouri athletics director Jim Sterk sent an email to all 550 student-athletes under his watch and addressed the recent news about Larry Nassar, the former sports medicine doctor at Michigan State who was convicted of sexually abusing female students.

“Nassar was entrusted to provide medical care to athletes, primarily gymnasts, and has a lengthy history of intentionally preying on young, trusting athletes,” Sterk wrote. “His conduct demonstrates a blatant and egregious abuse of power; the depth and breadth of which is incomprehensible.”

While the Nassar cloud hangs over the Big Ten school as the latest major controversy to ensnare a prominent college athletics department, Sterk is taking steps on his campus to avoid becoming the next Michigan State, the next Baylor, the next Penn State. In his letter to Mizzou athletes, Sterk encouraged them to share concerns with their coaches, administrators and the department’s two staff psychologists. In the coming weeks, Sterk plans to meet with every team to personally address the Nassar story.

“It is my highest priority,” Sterk wrote, “that our environment be safe, and support excellence in every regard for each and every one of you.”

Ten days before Sterk’s letter arrived in inboxes, Mizzou suspended basketball player Terrence Phillips on Jan. 26, the same day the school’s Title IX office notified a woman that her complaints against Phillips were under review. At least four women have filed complaints with
the Title IX office against Phillips, accusing the junior point guard of a range of incidents, from physical abuse to stalking to non-consensual recording of a sexual encounter, the alleged victims have told the Post-Dispatch. The Title IX office investigates cases of sex discrimination and sexual violence on campus. Among the wide range of allegations the office investigates are sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking on the basis of sex, dating violence and sexual exploitation.

Privacy laws prevent the university from disclosing information about open investigations, though Sterk acknowledged his department’s proactive push to “create a safe atmosphere” for its athletes in an interview this week.

“You get 30,000 students here and you’re going to get some folks who maybe shouldn’t be here,” Sterk said Tuesday in his Mizzou Arena office. “The quicker you weed those folks out, the better. But, also, what are the things you do to make the environment as safe as it can be?”

Before Sterk arrived in 2016, Mizzou had its share of missteps with incidents that were not properly reported to the school’s Title IX office and were later exposed in national media reports. In 2014, the school underwent sweeping policy changes to refine the reporting process and hired a full-time Title IX coordinator.

In Phillips’ case, the athletics department acted swiftly to take him off the court as soon as the university launched its investigation. The former starter is prohibited from taking part in team activities during the suspension.

In his two years at Mizzou, Sterk has worked closely with two student-athlete leadership groups, SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Committee) and SAFE (Student-Athletes Fostering Equality) and embraced partnerships with other campus organizations through the school’s Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, including the Green Dot program and It’s On Us, an extension of the Obama administration campaign to end sexual assaults on college campuses.
Tori Schafer, a Mizzou senior and director of the It’s On Us movement, has noticed a stronger commitment from athletics since Sterk came to Mizzou in 2016. The NCAA now requires college athletes, coaches and administrators to complete annual sexual violence prevention education, and at Mizzou, coaches Barry Odom (football), Cuonzo Martin (men’s basketball) and Steve Bieser (baseball), among others, have worked with campus organizations in prevention training meetings, Schaffer said.

“It’s not only Jim Sterk, but the coaches have really been receptive,” Schafer said. “Coach Bieser took the time to visit with our organization and talk to women on campus who had experienced sexual assault. He made it clear this is an issue of great importance and said, ‘I want to do all I can to make sure my men are abiding and following rules and being positive contributors to our community.’ ”

Bieser’s team was the school’s first to partner with It’s On Us as Tigers pitcher Nolan Gromacki, the president of SAAC, organized an It’s On Us fundraiser for a weekend series last season. Schafer believes MU athletes can use their elevated platforms to be among the campus’ stronger advocates for such movements.

“If the players were given more opportunities and more time to have dialogue with student leaders on campus, then we’d see even more productive discussions in athletics,” she said.

On the same day Mizzou suspended Phillips, Sterk fired softball coach Ehren Earleywine. Sterk has not publicly shared reasons why he fired one of his most successful coaches two weeks before the season started but said MU had “lost confidence in Coach Earleywine’s leadership to foster the type of healthy environment we expect for our student-athletes.” Two years ago the school’s Title IX office investigated allegations that Earleywine had mistreated players, though he was cleared of violating any conduct policies related to the Title IX investigation.

There is no tangible link between the two moves, and sources within the athletics department insist the timing was coincidental, though on the heels of the Michigan State controversy and the tenuous climate around college sports, both moves touch on Sterk’s decisive approach to ensure
that “healthy environment.” It’s fair to wonder if Mizzou has lowered the threshold for what it will tolerate under Sterk’s leadership.

That includes, Sterk believes, holding his coaches and staff members accountable beyond wins and losses. “Win it right,” he urges coaches. Sterk uses an acronym for those expectations, RIGHT: Respect Integrity Gratitude Humility Together.

“It’s always been about doing it right and holding (coaches) accountable for the right things and coaching in the right way and their expectations in their programs,” Sterk said. “Maybe not holding them to a higher standard, but there’s a higher sensitivity.”

After he was fired, Earleywine issued a lengthy statement, citing Mizzou’s “love affair with soft coaching.” Sterk objected to that portrayal.

“I don’t want to get into a back and forth with that,” Sterk said, “but I think we have good examples of the Brian Smiths, the Robin Pingetons, the Cuonzo Martins, the Barry Odoms, whose coaching isn’t soft. They’re holding people accountable. It’s tough love.

“But it needs to be in the right way.”
As Kaplan Sale Faces Final Hurdle, Purdue President Criticizes Faculty Opponents

NO MU MENTION

By Chris Quintana

Purdue University’s president, Mitch Daniels, and some of its faculty members are still sparring over the institution’s proposed purchase of Kaplan University.

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education and the U.S. Department of Education have already approved the deal, and the regional accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, is scheduled to review the proposal in a hearing this week. The Lafayette Journal & Courier reported on Monday that some faculty members said they would travel to Chicago for the hearing in an effort to stop the acquisition.

“Our main goal is just to encourage the commission to consider sending this deal back to the Board of Trustees and to include proper faculty and student input,” said Alberto Rodriguez, chair of Purdue’s University Senate.

Daniels pushed back against the faculty protest, according to the newspaper, and specifically criticized a petition that raised concerns about Kaplan’s being under government investigation.

“Anyone who has signed that letter has been misled,” Daniels said. “By now, I don’t know how. These things have been refuted. If that had been turned in on a term paper, you’d have given it an F.”

The deal has been contentious since it was announced, in April. Some faculty members and other observers have questioned the university’s motives and said they feared that the quality of the university’s degrees could suffer. Critics of the plan have also complained that faculty members weren’t included in the decision-making process.

Others raised concerns that Kaplan, a for-profit chain, would retain control of its institutions while benefiting from the association with Purdue, prompting questions about whether the new entity could be considered a public university.

Daniels has argued that the move will allow Purdue to better serve adult students and expand its online offerings, the newspaper reported.

Kaplan has 29,000 students online and in person in Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin. Under the deal, the Kaplan name would be dropped and the institution would be called Purdue University Global.