Why Aren’t There More Women in Science and Technology?

A new study finds puzzling national differences: a bigger share of STEM degrees for women in Tunisia than in Sweden

Generated from News Bureau press release: **Countries with greater gender equality have lower percentage of female STEM graduates, MU study finds**

*By Susan Pinker*

A key tenet of modern feminism is that women will have achieved equity only when they fill at least 50% of the positions once filled by men. In some fields, women have already surpassed that target—now comprising, for example, 50.7% of new American medical students, up from just 9% in 1965, and 80% of veterinary students. But the needle has hardly moved in many STEM fields—such as the physical sciences, technology, engineering and math, in which barely 20% of the students are female.

A new study suggests some surprising reasons for this enduring gap. Published last month in the journal *Psychological Science*, the study looked at nearly a half million adolescents from 67 countries who participated in the Program for International Student Assessment, the world’s largest educational survey. Every three years, PISA gauges the skills of 15-year-olds in science, reading and math reasoning. In each testing year, the survey focuses in depth on one of those categories.

In 2015 the focus was on science literacy, which gave the psychologists Gijsbert Stoet of Leeds Beckett University and David Geary of the University of Missouri a rich data set for examining not only national differences but also the range of academic strengths and weaknesses within each student.

Some fascinating gender differences surfaced. Girls were at least as strong in science and math as boys in 60% of the PISA countries, and they were capable of college-level STEM studies nearly everywhere the researchers looked. But when they examined individual students’ strengths more closely, they found that the girls, though successful in STEM, had even higher scores in reading. The boys’ strengths were more likely to be in STEM areas. The skills of the boys, in other words, were more lopsided—a finding that confirms several previous studies.
If boys chose careers based on their own strengths—the approach usually suggested by parents and guidance counselors—they would be most likely to land in a STEM discipline or another field drawing on the same sorts of skills. Girls could choose more widely, based on their own strengths. And both, of course, would pursue their particular interests, as best they could.

Which leads to the study’s most thought-provoking finding. Based on how female students did in math and science in high school, the researchers predicted that at least 41% of girls would pursue a college STEM degree. This was indeed what they found, using Unesco education data—but only in countries with relatively weak legal protections for women, such as Algeria, Tunisia, Albania and the United Arab Emirates. So the nations with the least gender equality, as determined by the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report, had the highest representation of women in STEM.

Conversely, nations with the strongest protections for women and the most dependable social safety nets—such as Sweden, Switzerland, Norway and Finland—had the fewest female STEM graduates, about 20% overall. The study puts the American STEM graduation rate at 24%.

I asked Wendy Williams, founder and director of the Cornell Institute for Women in Science, what she makes of these findings. She wrote that if girls expect they can “live a good life” while working in the arts, health or sciences, then girls choose to pursue what they are best at—which could be STEM, or it could be law or psychology. She added, “However, if the environment offers limited options, and the best ones are in STEM, girls focus there...Stoet’s and Geary’s findings deservedly complicate the simplistic narrative that sex differences in STEM careers are the result of societal gender biases.”

That conclusion should prompt a rethink. If women are most likely to choose STEM careers in societies that offer less equality and fewer personal freedoms, then that’s a steep price to pay just to say we’re 50/50.
Could Social Media Be Good for You? These Researchers Say Yes

By JON SWARTZ

Generated from News Bureau Press Release: Social media does not decrease face-to-face interactions, MU study finds

Maybe Facebook (FB) and Snap (SNAP) are good for you after all.

Researchers at the University of Missouri and University of Kansas think so. They concluded social media use has "no significant negative effect on social interactions or social well-being."

Michael Kearney, assistant professor at the MU School of Journalism, says changes in social media use were not associated with changes in direct social contact. In fact, participants’ feelings of social well-being actually increased, he says.

There is historical precedence to the schools' findings. Before social media, there were fears that inventions such as the telegram, television, and smartphones could lead to declines in in-person social interactions and the potential for increased unhappiness.

Those conclusions are sure to be debated, as Facebook increasingly takes center stage in a national conversation on its influence in cultural and political matters. Former President Barack Obama, speaking at MIT’s Sloan Sports Conference this week, said we need to “have a conversation about the [Facebook-Google duopoly] business model that recognizes they are a public good as well as a commercial enterprise. They’re not just an invisible platform, they’re shaping our culture in powerful ways.”

Facebook has acknowledged studies that conclude social-media use can lead to mental health issues through "passively consuming information" that leave people "feeling worse." But its solution is for people to engage and interact more with one another on the platform.
Former Facebook executive Chamath Palihapitiya, in a speech at the Stanford Graduate School of Business in November, outlined what he called the company's detrimental effects. "The short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops that we have created are destroying how society works," he said. "No civil discourse, no cooperation, misinformation, mistruth."

Futurity: The AAU Research News Site, #17 most visited science news site

Social media doesn’t hurt your face-to-face socializing

Generated by MU News Bureau release: Social media does not decrease face-to-face interactions, MU study finds

Posted by Cailin Riley

Social media use doesn’t negatively affect our social interactions or social well-being in a significant way, a new study reports.

“The current assumption is that when people spend more time on apps like Facebook and Snapchat, the quality of their in-person social interactions decreases…”

The adoption of new technologies, such as television, smartphones, and social media, often leads to fears of the decline of face-to-face interactions and the potential for decreased happiness.

“The current assumption is that when people spend more time on apps like Facebook and Snapchat, the quality of their in-person social interactions decreases,” says Michael Kearney, assistant professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. “However, our results suggested that social media use doesn’t have a strong impact on future social interactions.”

Kearney and the research team set up two studies, one long-term and one short-term, to test the theory. The first study, which followed the social media use of individuals from 2009 to 2011, found that change in social media use was not associated with changes in direct social contact. In addition, the participants’ feelings of social well-being actually increased.
The second study, which surveyed adults and college students through text-messaging over the course of five days, found that social media use earlier in the day did not have any impact on future social interactions. However, the researchers also found that passive social media use led to lower levels of well-being if that person had been alone earlier in the day.

“People who use social media alone likely aren’t getting their face-to-face social needs met,” Kearney says. “So if they’re not having their social needs met in their life outside of social media, it makes sense that looking at social media might make them feel even lonelier.”

Social media may not fill the ‘social void’
The aspect of time may be an important element to consider when it comes to studying the effects of social media, Kearney says. For example, while time spent using social media sites like Facebook doesn’t take away from other social interactions, it is likely that using any type of media borrows time that could be used for face-to-face interactions.

“People are spending increased amounts of time using the internet and other media that may replace the time they could use for speaking face to face, but that doesn’t mean that they are worse for it,” Kearney says. “People must ultimately be responsible for maintaining their relationships, whether that’s through social media or other means.”

The researchers report their findings in the journal Information, Communication and Society.

The coauthors of the study are Jeffrey Hall, associate professor at the University of Kansas, and Chong Xing, a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas.

Missouri Times

University of Missouri System looks to showcase work with legislative day

By BENJAMIN PETERS

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – If things seemed a little more black and yellow at the Missouri State Capitol on Wednesday, it might have something to do with the fact that it was the annual legislative day for the University of Missouri System.

Members of the UM System flocked to Jefferson City in hopes of highlighting the work of the four universities (Columbia, Kansas City, Rolla, and St. Louis) and demonstrating the value to Missouri’s citizens and communities.
Among those from the UM System included UM System President Mun Choi and other leaders, as well as the mascots from each respective school. Members of the Mizzou Athletic Department like Football Coach Barry Odom, QB Drew Lock, Head Wrestling Coach Brian Smith, and Olympic bronze medalist J’Den Cox were also in attendance for the showcase held at the DoubleTree Hotel.

But the legislative day also comes as the University has notified some non-tenure faculty that their contracts will not be renewed, citing the proposed cuts to higher education by Gov. Eric Greitens, as well as uncertainty regarding the efforts attempting to reduce those cuts during the legislature’s work on the budget.

“Despite our best efforts, the University of Missouri continues to face significant budget challenges,” Interim Provost Jim Spain said in a letter Wednesday. “While we work productively with our legislators, it remains prudent for us to plan on a potential significant drop in state revenue for the upcoming fiscal year.”

The Governor’s 2019 budget proposal would decrease the higher education funding by $70 million from the prior numbers in 2018.

“As the budget picture is clarified, we will be able to make additional decisions, including potential renewals of (non-tenured) faculty later in the spring,” Spain wrote in his letter. “If that happens, we could hire some of these individuals back; however, we’re not in a position currently to renew all contracts for next year.”

MU faculty react to contracts not being renewed

By MATTHEW JUDE AND CLAIRE KOPSKY

COLUMBIA - **MU’s announcement that an unknown number of non-tenure track (NTT) faculty would not have their contracts renewed began to sink in for MU faculty members Thursday.**

Wednesday MU Provost Jim Spain [sent an email](mailto:) to NTT faculty members notifying them that some faculty members would not have their contracts renewed next year unless budget circumstances change.

**Faculty council meets about cuts**

MU Faculty Council Chair Bill Wiebold, who found out about the cuts around the same time as those who will likely lose their jobs, voiced his disappointment with the cuts.

“I understand, but I’m very sad. You know its people's lives and some of these people have worked at the university for a long time. It’s just a sad situation,” he said.

While he is disappointed, Wiebold said he understands that budget cuts necessitate layoffs.

“How do you have a reduction that doesn’t mean that we’ll have fewer people working here next year than we have this year...it’s just reality,” he said.

Despite the budget not yet being finalized, MU is mandated to provide a 90-day warning to those people whose contracts will not be renewed.

“We have to follow the rules, and that’s what part of the problem is here. We have to tell people now even though we don’t really know what the budget is going to be. We might not know until May because that’s when the budget has to be done,” Wiebold said.

Some reactions Wiebold heard from faculty question the state budget.

“Surely there’s other places in the whole state budget that could be cut rather than our university budget, but that’s where we are so of course we are going to say that,” Wiebold said.

Wiebold is concerned that these cuts will drastically impact some departments.

“You talk about cutting the fat away and then you’re starting to cut muscle away, and in some cases you’re actually right down to the bone, and I think in some colleges, some departments, that’s where we’re at,” he said.

**Non-tenure track faculty weigh in**

Chair of the Non-Tenure Track Standing Committee and Director of Russian Undergraduate Studies Nicole Monnier is also concerned about the impact on specific departments.

“The School of Journalism would be an excellent example. You can’t remove people from the newsroom right? Who’s going to run the newsroom? That’s a lot of your NTT faculty there and
elsewhere. So it’s not that we’re kind of add-on faculty, we’re actually essential to the mission of the school,” she said.

Monnier said her main concern is the vulnerability NTT faculty face.

“First and foremost is the instability of our positions. Many of us...the majority of us, are only on one-year contracts,” she said.

Monnier said in the current market it typically takes faculty at least a year to find another job. She believes longer contracts would reduce some of the vulnerability NTT faculty face.

“We [the Non-Tenure Track Standing Committee] have in the last year and a half been advocating very, very strongly for a rolling contract that would allow NTTs, as they accrue years on campus, to have a two or three year rolling contract,” she said.

Last year the NTT Standing Committee submitted a contract proposal that was denied by the deans. Monnier said the Office of the Provost is working on a solution.

“Our understanding is the provost’s office is working on, I will call it, a compromise proposal that will give some more stability to us, but probably not what we’d really like to see, which is ultimately a three-year contract which is what the collected rules allow us to have but is the upper levels of what NTT faculty are allowed to be given,” she said.

Monnier, who has been a faculty member for 18 years, avoided the cuts but said she never feared her job was in jeopardy until last year.

“It’s frustrating and depressing. Budget concerns aside, it’s hard to have been a member of this community for 18 years and feel like you could be a 'minus $50,000' or whatever towards the budget deficit.”

**Faculty speaks on interim provost's announcement**

Monnier also spoke to the email that laid off faculty members received from Spain.

“I really respect Provost Spain. I think what he was trying to do, which is rather novel at this university, was to be transparent that this is happening. I don’t think the email was read closely enough to understand how it would be heard. I do think there’s a gap between what the email intended and what people heard.”

Spain was present at a Faculty Council Executive Committee meeting Thursday.

“He understands that we represent colleges and that we’re in communication with our colleagues. Jim is a very optimistic person and most of our conversation was on, not that we’ve got a lot of challenges or problems, but here’s the plan, we’re gonna fix it in this way,” Wiebold said.
Facing budget cuts, MU tells some non-tenured faculty that contracts won't be renewed

By: Katy Bergen

Proposed cuts to higher education by Gov. Eric Greitens — and uncertainty surrounding whether efforts to reduce those cuts will be successful — have prompted the University of Missouri to notify some non-tenure faculty that their contracts will not be renewed.

"Despite our best efforts, the University of Missouri continues to face significant budget challenges," Interim Provost Jim Spain said in a letter Wednesday. "While we work productively with our legislators, it remains prudent for us to plan on a potential significant drop in state revenue for the upcoming fiscal year."

While the depth of the financial hit to higher education will not be clear until the state budget is approved in June, higher education cuts are expected to coincide with a drop in tuition revenue next year, when the university accepts an incoming freshmen class projected to be smaller than the current graduating senior class.

The university is contractually required to give some individuals 90 days of notice if it does not intend to renew their non-tenure track contract, university spokesperson Christian Basi said Thursday. With the budget picture in Jefferson City "cloudy" and enrollment numbers uncertain until early May, the university was forced to anticipate budget shortfalls for the next fiscal year.

"We're having to make decisions based on the information we have today in the hopes that it might change," Basi said.

The university did not have a total number of people who were informed about their contracts. According to the university's Institutional Research & Quality Improvement, 43 percent of the university's full-time faculty was considered non-tenure track in 2017.

Last June, slashes to higher education funding prompted the UM System to shave $101 million and 474 jobs from its budget. More than 300 of those positions were eliminated at the University of Missouri at Columbia.

This year, Greitens has once again proposed cuts to higher education. His 2019 budget proposal released in January would decrease 2018's higher education funding by $70 million, though some lawmakers have proposed a plan to pare back that amount and legislative leaders are confident that those cuts will not be enacted to the extent that the Governor intended.
Basi said that this year department unit leaders have been asked to prepare scenarios for 10 percent, 12.5 percent and 15 percent budget cuts. They will also review whether small enrollment in classes will affect the needs of various programs.

The cuts will not be evenly distributed across the university's various schools, but determined within departments.

Meanwhile, university officials said they are focused on persuading lawmakers to restore funding to Missouri's universities and colleges.

On Wednesday, Spain said he and UM System President Mun Choi met with lawmakers in Jefferson City to advocate for more funding.

If cuts are less dramatic than expected or if students who fueled a strong application pool commit to the university in greater numbers by May, some individuals could be offered their jobs back.

"As the budget picture is clarified, we will be able to make additional decisions, including potential renewals of (non-tenured) faculty later in the spring," Spain wrote in his letter. "If that happens, we could hire some of these individuals back; however, we’re not in a position currently to renew all contracts for next year."

Some non-tenure-track faculty at MU were told Wednesday their contracts will not be renewed for the 2018-2019 school year, according to an email from Interim Provost Jim Spain.

“This is a very hard day for everybody,” MU spokesman Christian Basi said.
The number of affected faculty will differ from school to school, and the total number was not immediately available Wednesday afternoon, Basi said.

The school is required to notify non-tenure-track, or NTT, faculty 90 days in advance of the end of their contracts if it chooses not to renew them. Most whose contracts are year-to-year expire in May, Basi said, and Wednesday was the latest they could be informed.

Affected NTT faculty will receive some money from the school to help with the transition. To qualify for the assistance, they must be non-clinical faculty, be eligible for benefits and have worked at least three years. Their non-renewal also must be a result of the budget cuts, not because of poor performance.

- Faculty who have worked at MU between three and 10 years will receive a lump sum of $5,000.
- Those employed between 10 and 15 years will receive $10,000.
- Those who have worked at MU for more than 15 years will receive $12,500.

In 2017, about 43 percent of MU’s faculty were NTT, or 846 of the total 1,969 faculty members, according to data from MU’s Institutional Research & Quality Improvement. NTT faculty members are hired on one- to three-year renewable contracts without the possibility of tenure, which carries long-term job security.

Tenure-track and tenured faculty are evaluated in three ways: teaching, research and service — which includes participating in departmental and other committees and advising students. Non-tenure-track faculty are evaluated in two of those three categories, depending on their job descriptions.

**Who will make the decisions?**

Each MU unit — colleges, divisions and various offices — has been tasked with planning for 10, 12.5 and 15 percent budget cut possibilities, Basi said. The budget picture for next year is far from set in stone, he said, and decisions are being made based on current budget and enrollment projections that are subject to change.
The three plans — for 10, 12.5 and 15 percent, or $48.6 million, $59.1 million or $69.6 million in cuts — will be submitted to the chancellor’s office, which will review all potential cuts, Basi said. The final cuts will not necessarily be distributed evenly across all divisions, he said, and the decisions by deans for Wednesday’s NTT non-renewals are based on the knowledge that a substantial budget cut is highly likely.

The other system campuses were not engaged in the same process Wednesday. “The other schools are handling their own budgets as they see fit,” Basi said.

MU is “planning for the worst, but hoping for the best,” Basi said.

Some NTT faculty who were told they will not be renewed may have that change later this spring, Basi said, but it could be too late to stop them from leaving for other opportunities.

“Do we run the risk of potentially losing people? Yes, that is a concern,” Basi said.

“If the information on the budget stays the same as today, and doesn’t change, when it’s finalized in May and June these decisions will stand,” he said.

MU staff are, so far, not touched by projected budget cuts. However, Basi pointed out that hundreds — about 500 — of staff positions were eliminated in June to meet last year’s budget, so those areas of the budget may already be as trimmed as they can be.

**Budget woes**

The projected budget shortfalls are based on problems familiar to MU since 2015: declining state funding and enrollment.

Gov. Eric Greitens’ proposed budget would cut funding for the University of Missouri System by $43 million. Members of the legislature have said they do not support those cuts, but whether those cuts will be reduced, and by how much, likely won’t become clearer for weeks.

Sen. Dan Brown, head of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the goal is to find a level for higher-education funding that’s “somewhere in between” the amount the governor proposed
and the current funding level. That would mean that higher education funding would still be cut, but not as severely as the governor has recommended. He said more details should be worked out at the end of this month.

UM President Mun Choi said he could not comment specifically on the layoffs. He was at the Capitol on Wednesday lobbying for restoration of the system’s core budget.

“The proposed $40 million cut to our budget will have dramatic impact on our university,” Choi said.

Choi also advocated for bills that would increase the state-imposed tuition cap.

House Budget Chairman Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick said he and Choi are working on a deal that would restore funding to the UM System in exchange for an agreement on tuition rates for this upcoming school year.

“We want to make sure that there’s a correlation between the amount of money that we put back and the amount of money that’s coming out of the pockets of Missouri families that are paying to send their kids to school here.”

Fitzpatrick said the funds given back could vary anywhere from a small percentage of the cuts to a full restoration.

Despite the much-heralded bloom in applications to MU for this fall, total enrollment is expected to go down next academic year. MU’s first-time college enrollment peaked in 2014 at 6,515 students and was 6,191 in 2015, but has declined by almost exactly a third since.

A number of the students who came to MU when enrollment was booming will graduate this year and net enrollment will decrease — with tuition money going along for the ride.

The different unit leaders of MU’s divisions, schools and colleges were also free to seek areas for budget cuts besides NTT faculty non-renewals, but specific information for each unit was not immediately available.
“As the budget picture solidifies, we may have to make some more hard choices,” Basi said. “We’re watching it very closely.”

MU Chancellor Alexander Cartwright joined Choi and Spain at the Capitol on Wednesday to advocate for the school and its importance to the state.

Today’s cuts send a message to the legislature and the rest of the state that MU’s budget is already extraordinarily tight, Basi said.

“We have had nothing in our budget planning but cuts for the last several years,” Basi said.

Higher education state funding was cut by 9 percent last year. MU cut $60 million by laying off about 500 employees and spending $20 million from its reserves. It cut degree programs and closed a school-operated bed and breakfast, as well as a $10 million research institute ran by an award-winning scientist.

Choi also launched a top-to-bottom review of MU’s academic programs and the system and campuses’ administration. Accounting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers cautioned that the UM System could have a deficit of $160 million in five years if cuts and consolidations aren’t made to benefits, information technology or several other areas.

In late January, the academic review task force released recommendations calling for closure, further review or combination of dozens of graduate programs. Final decisions for those cuts will be announced by the end of this semester, Cartwright said at a press conference at the time.

Missourian reporters Max Fillion, Grigor Atanesian and Kacen Bayless contributed to this report.
Missouri House committee considers separate proposals on tuition and tenure

By Waverly Colville

The Missouri House Higher Education Committee heard several bills involving tuition cap increases and the elimination of tenure starting in 2019, during a hearing this week in Jefferson City.

State Rep. Charlie Davis, R-Webb City, speaks on the Missouri House floor in March 2017 (file photo courtesy of Tim Bommel at House Communications)

State Rep. Charlie Davis, R-Webb City, has a bill that would eliminate the limit on tuition for public colleges and universities that have not received an increase in state funding the previous fiscal year. Normally, institutions cannot raise tuition more than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) percentage. His bill also allows public institutions to raise tuition to the CPI plus 10 percent, even if they have received additional state funding.

“I believe the state’s got vested interest in making sure tuition is affordable but I think we’re at the point where we need to let the colleges and universities make the decision what is affordable in that district,” Davis says.

This proposal comes in the wake of Governor Eric Greitens’ (R) proposed $98 million in budget cuts to higher education, this fiscal year. Davis says this would allow these public institutions accommodate for the lost revenue from state funding.

“This becomes a free-market type of a bill that allows colleges, universities, the board of governors and the presidents to decide what the tuition is going to be,” Davis says. “I hate tying the hands of our board of governors and our presidents of our universities by telling them that they cannot do tuition above CPI especially in years that we withhold tons of money from them.”
Paul Wagner, the executive director of the Council on Public Higher Education in Missouri, testified for the bill during the Higher Education Committee because of the increased flexibility for institutions.

Steven Chaffin, the executive director of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, spoke for informational purposes, saying although he understands the good intentions of the bill, he’s also worried about the effects of eliminating the cap altogether.

Under a proposal from State Rep. Rick Brattin, R-Harrisonville, public institutions would stop offering tenure to staff hired beginning in 2019. This would save taxpayers money by making it easier to fire professors who are not performing, increase accountability and evaluate educators more efficiently, Brattin says.

“If we’re going to make the real changes to streamline higher education and ensure that they’re receiving the best education possible, we have to be able to look into the staff and people who are working in that system to ensure they’re doing the best job they can,” Brattin says. “But with the system that we currently have, that’s not able to be done with a tenured staff.”

However, this spurred lots of opposition from several committee members and representatives from all over the state from various higher education groups and institutions. Rep. Joe Adams, who was a history professor at St. Louis Community College for over 30 years, says a potential to get tenured is essential when hiring.

“I view this as an attack on the MU system for whatever reason and I am unalterably opposed and if this bill makes it to the floor I will be going ballistic and if I’m lucky enough next year to be on that other side, it definitely is going to be dead on arrival,” Adams tells the committee.

Several committee members also say that although saving money is a good intention, eliminating tenure is not the best way to do so. Tenure is essential for attracting and maintaining high-quality educators and for the UM System to remain in the Association of American Universities.

Representatives from Missouri State University, Missouri Western State University, Missouri National Education Association and the Missouri American Federation of Labor were opposed but did not have time to testify.
Dicamba drift puts natural areas at risk, environmental groups warn

By: Jonathan Hettinger

A similar story also was published in the Post-Dispatch: EPA eased herbicide regulations following Monsanto research, records show

After drift from the herbicide dicamba harmed millions of acres of soybeans in 2017, environmental groups are worried that it could damage sensitive ecological areas, particularly habitats for monarch butterflies.

“There’s too much that no one is watching,” said Kim Erndt-Pitcher, a habitat and agriculture programs specialist at Prairie Rivers Network, a nonprofit advocacy group for clean water in Illinois.

Erndt-Pitcher said that as dicamba drifted and harmed an estimated 600,000 acres of soybeans in Illinois in 2017, it’s likely that much of the habitat for endangered species and monarch butterflies was also damaged.

“With soybeans, people are out looking for it because it can affect their bottom line,” said Nathan Donley, a senior scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity. “With milkweed, the lack of complaints doesn’t mean it’s not there. It’s just not widely reported on.”

The herbicide has the potential to increase stress to the state’s already limited prairieland, some of which borders agricultural fields. Today, just over 2,000 untouched acres of prairie remain across Illinois, and these provide rare habitats for the plants and wildlife that were spread across Illinois’ 22 million acres of prairie two centuries ago.
Monsanto and German chemical company BASF developed new formulations of dicamba that were touted to less likely to drift. The products were approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in November 2016 and sprayed for the first time in 2017.

Several states received record complaints about pesticide drift in 2017, and University of Missouri weed scientist Kevin Bradley estimated that 3.6 million acres of soybeans were damaged by dicamba drift in 25 states.

Damage was also documented at natural areas, on oak trees and other specialty farms across the Midwest and South. But the extent of the problem is unknown, environmentalists said, because there aren’t people out looking for damage in most natural areas.

The need for new herbicides that could be sprayed on soybeans emerged after many weeds developed resistance to glyphosate, the most commonly used herbicide, which is made by Monsanto.

In response, Monsanto developed genetically modified soybeans that could be sprayed by dicamba, a very volatile herbicide that traditionally kills broadleaf plants like soybeans.

The U.S. EPA increased regulation on dicamba in October after the widespread damage reports. It named dicamba a restricted use pesticide, which imposes more regulations on those applying it.

It also limited the conditions in which dicamba can be sprayed. Several states, including Arkansas, Missouri, Indiana and Minnesota, have taken additional action.

But the new restrictions do not further protect natural areas. The agency had already required a downwind buffer zone to protect habitats that are home to endangered species.

Monsanto spokeswoman Charla Lord emailed: “Thanks for reaching out. You can find information about Monsanto at www.monsanto.com,” when sent an email with questions about the issue.
BASF spokeswoman Odessa Hines said the company is aware of drift issues and has 400 representatives in the fields to help farmers. Hines said the encouraged farmers “to plant milkweed in non-crop areas to help increase the monarch butterfly population.”

“Monarchs are declining, and milkweed is their only source of food, so we are certainly committed to helping growers sustain milkweed in non-crop areas,” Hines said.

Hines said dicamba was effective in 2017, and while drift issues are “concerning,” the company will work to help applicators properly use the herbicide.

**Monarch migratory habits correspond with dicamba use pattern**

By 2019, more than 60 million acres of the monarch butterfly's migratory habitat in the South and Midwest will be harmed by drift from the herbicide dicamba, according to a report from the Center for Biological Diversity, a nonprofit organization that advocates for endangered species.

“This has the potential to sort of escalate in the way glyphosate did,” said Donley, an author of the report.

The Center for Biological Diversity filed a complaint in 2014 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, prompting an investigation into whether the monarch, whose population has dropped 80 percent in the past 20 years, is endangered. The service has until 2019 to make a determination.

The use pattern of dicamba corresponds almost directly with the migratory habits of the monarch butterfly, so that when the species is in a certain area, it’s likely that would be near the peak usage of dicamba, Donley said.

The Midwest is in the middle of the flyway for monarch butterflies, providing habitat for the butterflies as they travel between Mexico and southern Canada. Monarchs must go through multiple generations in order to complete this migration, so they need to be able to lay eggs throughout the season. They can only lay eggs in milkweed plants.
Much of the "super generation" of monarchs that completes the migration to Mexico and lives through the winter is born in the Midwest.

Currently, the effect of dicamba on pollinators is largely unknown, though much research points to potential loss of habitat, Donley said.

Research from the U.S. EPA has found that in some ways, milkweed is more susceptible to damage from dicamba than glyphosate.

Dicamba drift makes milkweed less likely to flower and pollinators are less likely to visit plants affected by drift, Penn State researchers found.

Robert Hartzler, a weed science professor at Iowa State University, found that Monarch butterflies are just as likely to lay eggs on distorted milkweed plants as they are on healthy milkweed.

But Hartzler said dicamba damage year after year could have a long-term harmful effect on milkweed.

More than just monarchs

The monarch is not the only pollinator affected. Invertebrates and insects like crickets, grasshoppers and bees rely on many prairie plants to survive. These species pollinate and also provide a food source for small mammals and native and migratory birds.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found that 812 endangered species of plants and animals in 34 states were likely to be affected by drift from dicamba, according to federal documents.

However, in its final registration for the new formulations in November 2016, the agency determined there would be no drift with the new versions, so it would have “no effect” on these species.
Richard Coy, vice president of Coy’s Honey Farm in Arkansas, said that he had significant issues with bee hive loss in 2017, particularly near fields that had been sprayed with dicamba. He said he saw as much loss as 50 percent of his hives.

“A managed honey bee hive is an indicator of what is happening in the environment,” Coy said. “The same thing is happening to beneficial insects as bee hives.”

**Wildlife habitat susceptible to drift**

The Illinois habitats are largely found in places highly susceptible to drift from soybean fields – in medians between roads and agricultural fields, alongside railroad tracks and on hill prairies, which provide habitats for prairie plants and sensitive species.

“These habitats and these plant species are critical for Illinois wildlife and not just Illinois wildlife but also migratory wildlife,” Erndt-Pitcher said.

**Records obtained via the Freedom of Information Act** show that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Nature Preserves Commission are aware of damage from dicamba drift in at least four parks or nature preserves protected by the state.

Edward Cross, a spokesman for the DNR, said the department received reports of drift from field staff and private landowners.

“To obtain a more accurate picture of potential effects, the Department is developing a protocol for all staff to follow during the 2018 growing season. The IDNR wants to be certain staff are able to accurately and completely document any suspected pesticide damage to native plants and trees on state-owned and managed sites,” Cross said.

He said the agency is working with the Illinois Department of Agriculture on its protocol. He said the department will share its protocol and provide training for land trusts and conservation groups so they can accurately document any damage they may observe.
Jen Walling, the executive director of the Illinois Environmental Council, which represents more than 80 environmental and community organizations, said she heard complaints about dicamba drift from environmentalists across the state.

“Most years, it’s usually just one group that complains, but this year it was so widespread,” Walling said.

The Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting is a nonprofit, online newsroom offering investigative and enterprise coverage of agribusiness and related issues.

One Man Can: Activist continues to speak out for inclusion

By Becca Martin-Brown

When Payton Head heard the "n-word" shouted at him on campus, he was startled -- but not surprised.

He was startled he was president of the student government at the University of Missouri in Columbia. He wasn't surprised because "I've experienced moments like this multiple times at THIS university, making me not feel included here."

Payton Head is speaking at 6 p.m. Monday for a screening of “Whose Streets” and a panel discussion at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

"I really just want to know why my simple existence is such a threat to society," Head wrote in a Facebook post that went viral.

His post led to the #ConcernedStudent1950 movement, during which campus protests resulted in the resignation of the chancellor and Mizzou system president in the fall of 2015. Now a graduate of the university, Head travels speaking on inclusion, based not just on race but disabilities and sexual orientation. He'll visit the University of Arkansas Monday and Tuesday and answered these questions for SUP this week.
Q. Tell me about the events that led up to your posting your frustrations on Facebook in 2015?

A. I believe that one of the major reasons that I wanted to post was because I was tired of the silence. The silence on campus, the indifference, and complacency shown towards injustices faced by students are what truly ignited the post. I knew that the first step in fostering change was to raise awareness.

Q. Your post ignited the "Concerned Student 1950" movement at Mizzou that ultimately brought down the chancellor and the system president. What was it like to take part in these protests -- and how have you moved forward from that watershed moment in your life?

A. My post, among many other events, ignited the protests in the fall of 2015. However, it is also important to remember that the source of the movement was the unarmed shooting of Michael Brown by the hands of the police in 2014. This movement was so much bigger than Mizzou. To be a part of it was intense but also empowering. This movement showed me that people united with a cause can truly create change. I've moved forward in many different ways. The fall of 2015 taught me resilience, but it also taught me that there is so much of a need for change-agents, social justice education and compassion and empathy.

Q. What are you focusing on now?

A. Now I continue to focus on building stronger and inclusive communities across higher education, global human rights, and on literacy for elementary school children.

Q. You're now on the circuit to speak on college campuses -- what's your take on the climate now?

A. In my conversations with students and staff, I have seen that there is an eagerness to talk about social justice. The climate varies, as no institution is the same. However, it is refreshing to see that there are advocates everywhere who are inspired by this story and this movement to find their role in making positive change for their communities.

Researcher explains the way media impacts how we treat each other
By MEGAN SANCHEZ

COLUMBIA — Dr. Lissa Behm-Morawitz has studied communication for years.

She is the co-director of the University of Missouri Media and Diversity Center, and has done extensive research in the areas of new technologies and social identity and analysis of stereotyping content and effects.

When asked about whether media impacts the way people treat each other, she said there is a direct correlation.

"Media in general influences how we act in terms of providing models," she said. "We follow those models in terms of behavior or communication even when we see those models in entertainment contexts."

She said there is a rich history demonstrating that media can affect the way people act.

"Media do impact how we act in our offline lives even when those media models might be fictitious in nature, for example. Representations of bullying in different contexts of media whether that be news, entertainment media, or social media can influence how we act in treating others as well."

MU to participate in state-wide tornado drill

Watch video at: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=e047bef9-f806-4fe6-956a-d989a84f3335
MU offers training, protocol for active shooter situation

By Stephi Smith

In response to the shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida, MU has taken steps to inform students of proper methods to take in case of an active shooter.

The Office of the Chancellor sent out an email Feb. 20 reminding students and staff of proper protocol and resources to prepare for an active shooter situation.

“This most recent incident reminds all of us to be vigilant and prepared for the unthinkable,” the email said.

The email provided a link for an “active shooter response tip sheet” made by the Department of Homeland Security. The tip sheet is a broad version of ALICE training, in which students are advised to first run and hide before, if necessary, attempting to fight the attacker.

MUPD Maj. Brian Weimer said the university adopts the same protocol as the DHS. The email also linked to a video made in 2016 called “Surviving an Active Shooter.”

Weimer said it is not MUPD nor the university’s responsibility to tell students exactly what to do. However, he said there are ways to prepare and use individual experience and instinct to respond. He also said it is university policy to tell students to stay out of harm’s way and to keep or get away from a possibly dangerous situation.

MUPD uses MU Alert, a messaging system aimed to keep students informed in cases of emergencies and potential threats to safety. Alerts are sent out through text and email, as well as posted on the MU Alert Twitter account and website.

Weimer advises students to remain updated through MU Alert when necessary to know the status of the university and be better able to make an informed decision in an emergency. For example, Weimer said, if a student is in their dorm room and sees there are reports of an armed person nearby, they might make the decision to stay inside.

Junior Colin Macgregor said he thinks the MU Alert system is flawed. In October, students were alerted through the university messaging system that there was a potential armed person on campus and advised to stay away from campus.

Macgregor said there were not enough messages sent out to students and there was a lot of communication through social media. The MU Alert Twitter account sent out 11 tweets that day, starting off with informing students about reports of an “active threat near Hitt St/Locust St.”
He said social media can be a useful tool for keeping people updated, but he would have rather seen more information sent out through texts so that more students could be informed of the situation.

“Texts are a broader form of communication,” Macgregor said. “They’re instantaneous and most, if not all, students have some kind of device that can receive a notification from a text immediately.”

Weimer also said he advises students to take advantage of MUPD’s Citizens' Response to Active Threats training. The course is based on the ALICE program and takes a “comprehensive approach to dealing with active shooter/violent intruder incidents that may occur in the workplace, school, or public settings,” according to MU’s website.

The training class is offered in two formats: as classroom-only that lasts up to two hours or with a “hands-on practical block” that is up to four hours. Students can sign up for the class through the university’s website.

Staff, faculty and graduate students of the MU English department were offered a training program through MUPD on Feb. 20.

“Students will learn how to react and respond to violent intruders by taking an active role in their own survival,” the website states.

'She doesn’t even go here!' Some thoughts on Russia’s 'Mean Girls' social media takeover

By: Brittany Crocker

Imagine you are at your house, chopping vegetables or doing whatever it is you do while the local news plays in the background.

The kids are in the living room playing together in front of the big screen, tuning in and out of the rehash of the day's events.

Suddenly, the screen turns to static and the image of another newscaster gradually takes shape on the screen. It looks like the anchor is from the same station. Maybe you just missed a quick "Back to you, Don."

The logos and screen graphics are the same...but...something is just off.
Your house has just been invaded via a hijacked broadcast.

In Robert Mueller's indictment of 13 Russian nationals for interfering in our 2016 presidential election, he calls this "information warfare." You may have heard of this tactic billed as the battle to "win hearts and minds."

It's important to note that the term "win" here doesn't mean "earn," as one would do for a trophy. It means "change," as in to win influence over: to sow distrust, disrupt values and reasoning, or reinforce behaviors and attitudes that would benefit an invading force.

It would be bad enough if it was your own country's government disrupting your media, but a foreign power? Inconceivable.

Well, Russia did it. In a campaign straight out of Mean Girls queen bee Regina George's playbook (Or should I sayburn book?), the country's operatives carpeted America's virtual hallways with blatant falsehoods, sat back, and watched the chaos ensue.

Raise your hand if you've ever felt personally victimized by fake news.

According to Mueller's indictment, Russia paid operatives at the "Internet Research Agency," acrimoniously nicknamed "the troll farm," to retweet the falsehoods with inflammatory captions.

Twitter has since deleted 200,000 tweets associated with fake Russian accounts, many of which were unknowingly retweeted by American citizens. Two. Hundred. Thousand.

That doesn't even count the troll farm's paid advertisements.

If the assault intended to inflame American political atmosphere, it worked. So, why aren't Americans more upset about Russia's social media invasion?

From Columbia, Missouri to Washington

I had a lot of classmates in college and grad school at the University of Missouri in Columbia, but I don't remember ever sitting next to the Kremlin in the J-cafe.

Nevertheless, Russian operatives were found to have encroached on our campus in 2015, after one student's hunger protest against unaddressed campus racism and the cancellation of student health benefits triggered campus-wide demonstrations.

New information from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and research by Air Force Lt. Col. Jarred Prier of Air University's Strategic Studies Quarterly references a morning I remember well.

My peers and I all awoke to find #PrayforMizzou trending on social media. Ridiculous tweets alleging police were marching with the Ku Klux Klan--who had not been seen on campus--and accusations of violent behavior were all over the place.
It really wasn't like that, guys! I was there.

Network news stringers built a circus around the campus anyway, and things heated up fast. A teacher even threatened one of my classmates who was taking photos on one of the campus quads.

According to Prier, the disinformation campaign was executed via about 70 Russian bot accounts, retweeting another one of their accounts named "Jermaine." For some reason, "Jermaine" was using a photo of a bruised African American child from Ohio to pose as a local.

The operation succeeded in shaping public perception of protests and groups present on the campus into one of savagery and irredeemable chaos.

Without going into details I don't have the word count for, all hell broke loose on campus. Now, the school that turned me into a reporter still struggles with declining funds and enrollment that resulted.

**Fast forward a year.**

"Jermaine" has suddenly changed his account name, gender and photo to represent a white, middle-aged, female Trump supporter.

"Deplorable Lucy," as Russia's "troll farm" called her, collected about 11,000 followers within just a few days, Prier said.

Russian robot accounts retweeted her distracting and false content about then-candidate Donald Trump's opposition any time the man's name fell into scandal (which was admittedly often, if you were paying attention to the election at all).

And remember #PizzaGate? Guess who was behind that?

Yep.

**What it's really about**

Look, I know this is a touchy subject, alright. I don't think any single American besides Hannah Montana ever had a more fervid base than the sitting president.

I'm not here to tell you that Russian interference won the election. There's no doubt it helped, but this is not about a single president. This is not even about a foreign government's ability to affect the atmosphere at a public university nearly 5,000 miles away.

This is about count one in Mueller's indictment: conspiracy to defraud the United States.
You guys, protest and the electoral process are cornerstones of this country. They are literally written into the Constitution. The fact that a foreign country would attack these foundations has to tell you they are good, effective things to have here.

Alongside those cornerstones is the right to a free press, which is supposed to be a trusted source of information for the American public.

It's no coincidence that the presidential election Russia interfered in was also the event that coined the buzzword "FAKE NEWS." The sad irony is that actual fake news sources, many of which are foreign, became arbiters of the term's weaponization against legitimate American media outlets.

Of course, just like the faux broadcast I mentioned earlier, fake and inflammatory media is hard to separate from the real thing if you aren't on guard.

I'm running out of words to give you a full crash course on what we call "media literacy," but, please check out this link to the Newseum's resources on spotting fake news. I think they're some of the best out there.

A free press is not government sponsored and therefore does not count on government to protect it. It has to count on readers, or the people, as the founding fathers might say, to embrace truth over convenience.

I'll leave you with this quote from mid-20th-century German-American political writer Hannah Arendt:

"If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer," she told French writer Roger Errera in 1978.

"A people that no longer can believe anything cannot make up its mind. It is deprived not only of its capacity to act but also of its capacity to think and to judge. And with such a people you can then do what you please."
University of Missouri Board of Curators approves $32M project

By: Tribune Staff

UM System Story No MU Mention

The University of Missouri Board of Curators approved Thursday a $32.1 million project to build a new School of Computing and Engineering Education and Research Center on UM’s Kansas City campus.

The project, which will be funded by $24.7 million in private donations, $5.4 million in state funds and $1.9 million in federal grants for equipment, will serve a student body expected to grow from 1,660 students to 2,700 by 2022, according to a memo prepared for the curators. The School of Computing and Engineering Education has more than doubled over the past nine years, the memo states.

The 44,400 square-foot facility will be located north of Robert H. Flarsheim Science and Technology Hall, where renovations will provide connections to the new building on the second through fifth floors. A design will be presented to the curators in April. Construction is expected to be completed in August 2020.

One in 30,000: The woman who listens to the toughest stories for a living

By Mawa Iqbal

Some days were better than others. Some days she would come home from work unfazed by her clients’ most harrowing stories of abuse and violence. Other days, she couldn’t help but periodically go to the break room at her part-time job at Old Navy and just cry.
As she gained more experience in the world of social work, Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center Advocacy Coordinator Taylor Yeagle learned to develop a self-care system involving therapy, friends, family and things that make her happy.

As advocacy coordinator, Yeagle meets with clients, listens to their stories and determines what specific resources they could benefit from.

For those weeks where her clients’ stories would cut her to the core, Yeagle would try to invest herself in the stories within the novels she’d read. It made her difficult job a bit easier.

But she didn’t choose this job because it was easy. She didn’t become drawn to the idea of empowering victims of violence because it was a mundane task she’d carry out at a 9-to-5 office shift.

During her undergraduate years at MU, Yeagle studied social work and worked as an intern at True North of Columbia, a shelter for victims of domestic and sexual violence. There, Yeagle worked as an advocate intern for the Domestic Violence Enforcement Unit from August to December 2014.

Then, during her last semester as an MU graduate student, Yeagle applied for the sexual violence victim advocate position at True North, where she worked until August 2015. Once September of that year rolled around, Yeagle came to MU to work at the RSVP Center.

Yeagle sits in the center’s Advocacy Coordinator Office, which she’s decorated with dimly lit lamps, flowers, fresh plants and personal photos. She has opted for a softer, pastel color scheme for her furniture over the neutral greys found in a typical office.

“I purposely try to cultivate a space that feels calm and safe,” Yeagle said. “This space is really important for having a conversation with people about their needs and how we can help meet those needs.”

As an advocacy coordinator, Yeagle operates on a person-centered model. Rather than subjecting each client to a predetermined checklist, Yeagle tries to figure out the context of their situations to determine what resources they need.

Whether that be giving the breakdown of the Title IX office’s process, handing out resource referrals or performing crisis interventions, Yeagle’s work stays behind her closed office door. She believes that the confidential nature of her service is part of the reason why her colleague at the LGBTQ Resource Center Sean Olmstead nominated her for the January Service Champion Award.

“I was incredibly taken aback and humbled by his gesture,” Yeagle said. “A lot of the work I do isn’t something that is broadcast widely … I don’t do this job to receive thanks or to get awards.”

She didn’t choose this job because it was easy or to receive accolades or public appraisal. She was drawn to the idea of empowering violence survivors for the stories.
But not the stories that would force her to retreat to the Old Navy break room. The ones that chronicle a person’s journey from victim to survivor.

“I count myself as incredibly lucky to be a part of those stories,” Yeagle said. “It’s a beautiful thing to stand back and watch them go through this really difficult journey and have the privilege to help them reflect.”

Yeagle often reassures clients who question how far they've really come in their journey of self-healing.

“No, when we first met two years ago you were here and now you’re here,” she said, demonstrating how she interacts with clients. “I know it feels like today you’re not very far and today doesn’t feel like a good today, but if you take a step back and look at the bigger picture, look how much you’ve accomplished despite what you thought you’d be able to do.”

Sitting across from someone and being trusted to hear a scary, personal story is special to Yeagle, but also something she feels she should never have to experience in the first place.

“We should be able to walk throughout our lives without fear of violence just by virtue of existing,” Yeagle said. “So it’s hard hearing these stories of other humans who’ve experienced the worst aspects of humanity.”

It’s hard, but it was through this job that Yeagle learned the value of listening to these stories.

“It affirms that person’s inherent value and humanity,” Yeagle said. “A lot of time people feel like their job is to be a fact-finder or an investigator, but that’s not our job. Our job is to listen to the person who’s choosing to come to you.”

**INSIDE HIGHER ED**

**Striking a Nerve: Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt offers strategies for when the right wing attacks.**

**NO MU MENTION**
By Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt

When Inside Higher Ed’s “Conditionally Accepted” column published my op-ed “A Checklist to Determine if You Are Supporting White Supremacy,” I was warned of potential backlash. Then it went viral.

While my piece was shared by hundreds of colleagues around the country, especially faculty of color, marginalized faculty and those who are committed to various equity, diversity and antiracist initiatives and interventions, it was simultaneously shared on right-wing media platforms that actively support structural, institutional and cultural racism and discrimination.

By Jan. 13, 2018, the next day, Campus Reform had picked up the piece and retitled it as “Prof Creates Checklist for Detecting White Supremacy.” This retitled piece had already been shared 1,500 times on various right-wing social media outlets.

The College Fix, The Washington Times, Barbwire, Reddit, The Blaze, The Gateway Pundit, Liberty Unyielding, Legal Insurrections and The Rightly Report republished the article on their sites under different titles. The National Sentinel titled its piece “Campus COMMIE: Lib Professor Claims Meritocracy is WHITE Supremacy.” The various headlines in these right-wing and alt-right publications quite correctly defined me as a “liberal” or “left-wing professor,” while others like The National Sentinel mistakenly marked me as an academic pushing “Communist” ideas in the classroom. Some right-wing critiques suggested that op-eds like mine are a clear indication that “Serious study is being replaced with social justice activism.” The College Fix made a point to emphasize that “Gender studies coordinator offers ‘checklist’ to determine if you support white supremacy.”

The above headlines proved my central thesis on white supremacy and two other significant points:

- These backlashes against social justice scholarship and activism are a reminder of the pervasive nature of everyday white supremacy in our culture.
- Social justice activism is not divorced from “serious study” -- it is “serious study.”

There were also confessions from self-proclaimed white supremacists. In Renegade Tribune, “WhiteWolf” commented, “I’m White so of course I support White supremacy. If Whites aren’t supreme then that means that other races are supreme over us. Why would I want that?” Joining WhiteWolf, thousands of self-proclaimed white supremacists doubled down on their racism, but also confirmed some features of white supremacy as noted in my “checklist.”

By Jan. 16, 2018 (just four days after the publication of the op-ed in Inside Higher Ed) conservative millennial Allie Beth Stuckey debated former Missouri Democratic state representative Don Calloway on Fox News, using my op-ed as a premise for discussing white supremacy, white racism and liberal bias on various college and university campuses. In their conversation Stuckey commented on how liberal professors are using “bias to drive their curriculum rather than honest dialogue” and concluded that “liberal colleges teach white shaming.”
While those who teach about racism and conduct antiracist work grounded in sociological and historical findings are repeatedly charged with “white shaming,” what is also ironic is that such work (both academic and activist) is often marked as promoting “reverse racism.” Sara Ahmed in her book *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* makes a poignant remark on “how the creation of diversity as a political solution can participate in making those who speak about racism the cause of the problem.”

These outbursts and outrages against liberal professors who have written or spoken about white supremacy in America have become routine. Scholars like Steven Salaita, Saida Grundy, Johnny Eric Williams, George Ciccariello-Maher, Amanda Gailey, Dorothy Kim and, most recently, David Palumbo-Liu have all been subjected to severe right-wing media scrutiny for their stances against white supremacy, white privilege, settler colonialism and fascism.

Furthermore, many scholars, and particularly those who are faculty of color or marginalized, have received little to no support within their own institutions that proclaim to protect the academic freedom of their faculty members. Their experiences mirror what Arianne Shahvisi has called “epistemic injustice” within the academy.

It should be noted that it is not just these attacks, but the chilling effect it produces on academic freedom that is detrimental to all faculty. While some institutions have taken strong positions to protect the academic freedom of their faculty members, there are other institutions whose reactions have been lukewarm. On her blog, Tressie McMillan Cottom points out quite succinctly “how woefully underprepared universities are to deal with the reality of public scholarship, public intellectuals, or public engagement.” Joan W. Scott (in an interview given to Bill Moyers) concluded that the treatment scholars is receiving today are worse than during the McCarthy era. “The internet has made possible a frightening practice of threats and intimidation -- threats of unspeakable violence and death … McCarthy’s were violent threats at a more abstract level. These are specific threats.”

So rather than depending on institutions to respond, I want to suggest a few safeguards if you want to enter the public discourse of critiquing white supremacy. These safeguards will certainly not eliminate any attacks or threats but can certainly minimize it.

- Be sure to remove from your institutional page your email address, telephone number, office address, office hours and any personal information that can easily be assessed by internet trolls.

- Make your Twitter account private and set your Facebook setting to “friends only” before the publication of your piece.

- Forward your piece to your president, dean or provost, head of the campus security, and media relations office as soon as it is published. This allows them to prepare a strategy to protect you and the institution before they start receiving thousands of phone calls and requests to fire you.

- As you start receiving the first wave of backlash, remind your administrators of the institution’s policy on academic freedom and request that they keep you informed about any outside interventions or threats made against you.
- Forward your administration AAUP’s recent publications on targeted online harassment and “What You Can Do About Targeted Online Harassment.”

- Avoid hyperlinks to any alt-right and right-wing media outlets. By linking to them, you not only invite the digital mob to make you a target for their attacks, but also promote their revenue stream.

  Just alerting the administration will not be enough. You will have to safeguard yourself from the emotional stresses as a result of the various threats and comments made on social media about you.

- Do not take each comment made by the trolls seriously, but do report the serious threats to your administration.

- Expect some of your own liberal (white) colleagues to be a bit nervous around you. Many of them will not want to discuss your article, although they may have read it. Give them time to process what you have written. Most of your colleagues are well meaning but simply are not trained to discuss race or white supremacy.

- Do not take it personally if people you thought were your allies are hesitant to share your piece on their social media spaces. Some of them have conservative friends and family members, and sharing your piece (which your allies actually endorse) may also invite some ugly conversations on their own social media space.

- Welcome the new group of allies who will thank you for your thoughts and share with you some of their own experiences.

  Last but not least, stick to your conviction about what you have written and said and remind yourself what Angela Davis once declared: “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things that I cannot accept.”