MU News Bureau

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Bill to loosen state tuition cap stalled in Senate

By Rudi Keller

Loosening the state tuition cap, a top legislative priority for the University of Missouri and other higher education institutions this year, is stalled in the state Senate over what to cover under an expanded limit and how much more students could be required to pay.

Since state Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, tried to get the bill passed by offering three different versions on Feb. 21, he’s been talking with each of the opponents to consider their objections and hopes to sit down soon with the most vocal opponent, state Sen. Rob Schaaf, R-St. Joseph.

Schaaf said Friday that he thinks there are far too many administrators making excessive salaries and doesn’t want students charged more to support them. He’s willing to give a bit, he said, if the bill also covers the course fees identified in a state audit last year as a loophole in the current cap.

“I believe that the rising cost of higher education, far above the CPI, is outrageous, and that there are many people at universities that are overpaid and right now there is a protection in the law for students from excessive tuition increases and I am not willing to give that away,” Schaaf said.

Under a law passed in 2007, with Schaaf’s support when he was in the Missouri House, higher education institutions cannot increase tuition by more than the change in the Consumer Price Index without putting a portion of their state appropriation at risk. Colleges and universities are seeking to change the cap to allow tuition increases above inflation in years when state appropriations are cut.

The law has effectively tied public higher education to tuition in Missouri, and since the law passed, the state has had one of the lowest rates of tuition increase in the nation.

Rowden’s bill, if passed, would not apply to tuition hikes approved by governing boards this spring for the fall term. The limit for the coming year will be a 2.1 percent increase, unless institutions seek a waiver of the law’s penalty provisions.

In the same session that passed the cap, lawmakers approved a budget appropriating $430.9 million for the UM System. If state appropriations had kept pace with inflation since the law was passed, the UM System allocation for the coming fiscal year would be $528.7 million.
In his budget proposal for the year beginning July 1, Gov. Eric Greitens recommended an appropriation of $376.5 million.

“That is the big part of this — as I said on the floor when I brought it up, I hope they never use it, because any year they use it will be a year that we cut core appropriations to higher education,” Rowden said.

Under his original proposal, governing boards would have been allowed to raise tuition by up to 10 percent more than CPI. The proposal on the Senate floor when debate was suspended cut the allowance to up to 5 percent above inflation for institutions such as UM that charge more than the state average for tuition and left it at 10 percent above inflation for those that charge less than the average.

The higher limit would only be allowed for years when state support did not increase and would also cover fee increases not currently limited by law.

“The inclusion of the fees was part of an ongoing conversation with Sen. Schaaf,” Rowden said. “I think that was a good addition. I think all we are focusing on now is what the final number is as far as CPI-plus number.”

Higher education institutions want the flexibility to go higher than inflation because the state hasn’t maintained support at past levels, said Paul Wagner, executive director of the Council on Public Higher Education, the association of state four-year universities.

One reason to adjust the cap, he said, is to allow for differential tuition, an idea being floated to tie what students are charged to the cost of offering their program. A student studying literature, for example, has a different cost to educate than one studying mechanical engineering.

“That is the whole idea behind the change in the law is flexibility,” he said. “If there is more flexibility on the general tuition side then it will be easier on campus to address these differentials.”

The fees that have been the subject of complaints have been imposed to address those differing costs and if they could be included in the tuition for a program it would increase price transparency, Wagner said.

“It would be cleaner and more understandable … at the front end,” he said. “With this kind of flexibility we could do a lot of the things we need to do and not have to do the generalized tuition increases.”

Rowden said he hopes to bring the bill back for additional debate within the next two weeks. A similar House bill received a hearing last week.

The allowance above inflation will have to be small and fees included if he is to relent, Schaaf said.
“I have been pretty much outraged at the excesses I see at the University of Missouri and I want to see some of those excesses reined in, with teachers teaching more hours and taking less time off,” he said.

**Numbers on how many NTT faculty were cut at MU trickle in**

BY KACEN J. BAYLESS AND ALEXIS ALLISON

*It was still unclear late Friday afternoon how many non-tenure-track faculty at MU will not have their contracts renewed for the 2018-2019 school year.*

Some NTT faculty members up for reappointment were notified Wednesday that they will lose their jobs effective at the end of May. Interim Provost Jim Spain said in an email that the non-renewals were a consequence of state budget cuts and decreasing net student enrollment.

Three of the four colleges from which information could be verified so far were not affected by the NTT cuts.

“To my knowledge we had no non-renewal notifications sent this week,” Christopher R. Daubert, dean of the College of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources, wrote in an email Friday.

The same was true for the College of Education. “Zero,” Steve Adams, the college’s manager of strategic communications, said Friday.

MU Law School Dean Lyrissa Lidsky said Wednesday the school’s NTT faculty are on contracts that end in May 2020 and were not affected. However, she said the school would have to reduce personnel to achieve certain budget-cutting scenarios proposed by top administrators.
“We need to cut almost $1 million to make a 10 percent budget cut,” Lidsky said. “We are still working out the details of the cuts.”

MU spokesman Christian Basi said earlier this week that each MU unit — colleges, divisions and various offices — has been tasked with planning for budget cuts of 10 percent, 12.5 percent and 15 percent. The final cuts will not necessarily be distributed evenly across all divisions, he said, and the decisions by deans for NTT cuts are based on the knowledge that a substantial budget cut is highly likely.

Notices of faculty cuts came after hundreds of staff positions were eliminated in June to meet last year’s budget.

Pat Okker, dean of the College of Arts and Science, said Wednesday: “Based on the current information I have, two non-tenure-track faculty members have appointments that will not be renewed based on budget cuts. Both faculty members have already been notified.”

Updated information was not immediately available Friday from Engineering, Business, Health Professions, Human Environmental Sciences, Journalism, Medicine, Nursing and Veterinary Medicine.

Basi said that although he hoped to have an update Friday on the total number of contracts not renewed, he had not received that information.

“I do know that the individuals who received the notices (of non-renewals) were also given additional information about transition assistance,” Basi said.

Eligible NTT faculty will receive transition assistance, according to Spain’s email. To qualify for the assistance, they must be non-clinical faculty, eligible for benefits and have worked at MU for at least three years — their non-renewal must also be a consequence of budget uncertainties, not poor performance.
Faculty employed by MU between three and 10 years will receive $5,000; between 10 and 15 years, $10,000; and 15 or more years, $12,500.

Ben Trachtenberg, former chair of the MU Faculty Council, attributed some of the current uncertainties to a system that was “designed in an older era, when the bulk of faculty were tenure or tenure-track.”

Tenure-track faculty who don’t receive tenure can stay at MU for another year, during which while they may seek alternate jobs. Staff members in good standing whose positions are discontinued can receive Transition Assistance Program, or TAP, pay based on their years of service. A permanent system of cushions like these doesn’t exist now for NTT faculty, Trachtenberg said.

“Something similar to that for NTTs in my opinion is essential,” Trachtenberg said.

Today, it’s much more common for a large university to hire NTT faculty to accommodate fluctuating student populations and tightening budgets, Trachtenberg said.

In 2017, about 43 percent of MU faculty were NTT, or 846 of the total 1,969 faculty members, according to data from MU’s Institutional Research & Quality Improvement.

A large percentage of those 846 are clinical faculty at MU Health Care, Trachtenberg said. Although they may do some teaching, they spend the majority of their time caring for patients.

“We’ve got NTTs who’ve been here for decades,” Trachtenberg said. “Some of the most important service on this campus is done by NTTs.”

Another question will be whether a system exists that might allow affected colleges to keep certain NTT faculty members who teach a large number of classes, he said.

“As far as I know, all of the deans are preparing different budget scenarios because of uncertainty with the state appropriations,” Trachtenberg said.
For now, he said he hopes a more permanent transition assistance system can be put into place that will benefit everyone — “anything we can do to provide a little more job security and a little more humane treatment for those (NTT faculty members).”

**Social media DOESN'T make people isolated and depressed, new research suggests**

By: Jaleesa Baulkman

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

Facebook does not decrease the amount of time people spend with each other, a new study claims.

Researchers found that social media use was not associated with changes in direct social contact, and may actually improve social well-being.

The adoption of new technologies from smartphones to social media, has led to concerns about their potential for reducing happiness and social interactions.

The current study, conducted by researchers at the University of Missouri, is the latest to suggest social media does not negatively impact face-to-face interactions.

'People tend to assume the worse about the emergence of technology,' said researcher Mike Kearney, assistant professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. 'The assumption that social media use has a universal and negative effect on face-to-face social interactions is tenuous at best.'

Investigators, led by Kearney, conducted a long-term and short-term experiment for their study. The first experiment, which followed the social media use of 2,774 individuals from 2009 to 2011, found that increased use of social media was not associated with changes in direct social contact.
The second study, which surveyed 116 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.

There's been controversy about whether people are using social media to replace face-to-face interactions.

A 2017 study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine found that social media use was associated with feelings of social isolation.

Meanwhile, a 2016 study published in New Media & Society found that although people use social media to 'people-watch', they still seem to enjoy and engage in face-to-face interactions. The current study, published in Information, Communication and Society, suggests time may be an important element to consider when it comes to studying the effects of social media.

For example, Kearney said that 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 said.

'People must ultimately be responsible for maintaining their relationships, whether that's through social media or other means.'

Researchers in the second, shorter and smaller study found that passively looking at social media, where users scroll through conversations without actively taking part, did lead to lower levels of happiness 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 said. '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 doesn't affect our face-to-face interactions, study finds

HANNAH BLACK

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

Using social media may not affect how social we are face-to-face.

A study published last month found that using social media affects neither future in-person interactions nor future well-being. Michael Kearney, an assistant professor at the Missouri School of Journalism, and his two co-authors from the University of Kansas found that the well-being of those who use social media only decreased when those same people were already more likely to spend time alone.

"Social media might be used by people who are lonely, but it's not necessarily what's causing them to be lonely," Kearney said.

None of the study's outcomes supported the social displacement hypothesis, which suggests that time spent on social media eats up the time people could be spending on real-life interactions.

"I think there's always a concern that new media technology will displace more real or authentic forms of human communication, and then potentially lead to adverse mental and physical health and loneliness and that type of thing," Kearney said.

But social media clearly can make social interaction and communication easier than it ever has been. A 2007 study of 1,200 Dutch teenagers produced a similar result to Kearney's study and found that instant messaging actually seems to strengthen existing friendships and increase well-being.
Possible origins of social media panic

About 77 percent of Americans had a smartphone in 2016, according to the Pew Research Center. And the number has likely risen since then — in 2011, the amount was just 35 percent.

Mobile phones are "uniquely off-putting" as a technology, Kearney said, because of the inclination to pull out a phone during a face-to-face interaction and pay attention to it instead.

But the reaction to new technology, be it radio, television or the smartphone, follows a recurring pattern of rejection and resentment from older generations.

"The way for us to make sense of something that we don't necessarily understand ... is to paint a pessimistic picture of it," Kearney said. "It's essentially moral panic."

A possible drawback to using social media as opposed to other forms of communication is that the interaction doesn't register on both sides. When you follow someone's social media account you might be keeping up with their life, but you're not necessarily building or maintaining that relationship, Kearney said.

However, scientists studying social media have found other reasons to be concerned. Research has shown adverse effects of social media on teenagers and young adults related to things like cyberbullying, sleep-deprivation and negative body image resulting in eating disorders.

But Kearney's study shows that it might not be worth worrying about social media's impact on our social lives and overall well-being.

"I think people (today) are better at knowing we're crying wolf," Kearney said. "Now it just happens to be social media."
Social media use doesn't affect relationships, study finds

By MAIA MCDONALD


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

COLUMBIA - A new study by at University of Missouri team may put to rest some concerns about whether social media sites, like Facebook and Twitter, are ruining human interaction.

Researchers at MU and the University of Kansas found social media use has no major impact on face-to-face interactions and interpersonal relationships.

"We looked at two different windows in time, one a big national survey that looked over the span of several years and one a week-long study that essentially asked people multiple times per day 'what are you doing right now,' 'how do you feel,'" said Michael Kearney, associate professor at the School of Journalism.

Kearney, along with his research team, looked at the two studies to test the impact of social media. The first study looked at social media use of individuals from 2009 to 2011, while the second surveyed adults and college students through text-messaging over the course of five days.

For Kearney, the research is especially important in today's technologically-advanced age.

"I think it's important to understand how people use social media and the effects it has on other social interactions," Kearney said. "I know a lot of people are concerned about social media in
particular might be causing us to be disconnected or lose out on more satisfying forms of social interaction that might be able to prevent things like loneliness or depression."

Kearney said he thinks many of the fears people have about social media are overblown.

"I also think we don't have a good understanding of what the timeframe of those effects could be, and I think that it's probably a lot more complicated than what people tend to assume," Kearney said. "We see this with the introduction of any new form of media technology. There's a concern that it will replace the world that we know and a lot of the ways that people deal with that uncertainty is to assume the worst."

Nathan Lundstrom, an accounting graduate student at the University of Missouri has his own thoughts on social media. Currently, he and his wife use sites like Facebook pretty casually.

"For us it's a good way to connect with family that's far away," Lundstrom said. "We have young kids so [our family] like to see pictures of them."

Lundstrom also says sometimes he can get annoyed with social media and is concerned for how it will affect his children in the future.

"As my kids get older, I'll be a little worried about some of the negative things I've read," Lundstrom said. "Comparing themselves to others and things like that. I think sometimes we can paint a false picture of our lives on social media. But it can also be a really good thing."

Lundstrom said sometimes he's able to read things that him or his family or new information he didn't know before. Like Lundstrom Kearney thinks that the use of social media can be a complex experience for those who use it that means different things for different people.

"It's probably helped a lot of people that form connections with people who are like-minded or similar who they might not have otherwise had exposure to," Kearney said. "I think it's probably caused a lot of people to become more isolated in their views because suddenly, everyone's views are a little more public. They might filter themselves off into echo chambers so to speak, and I think other people are exposed to things on a daily basis. So I think there's a whole range of effects and we're just starting to understand whether the things cause people to use social media certain ways and how can we encourage people to use it in the best ways."
MU School of Medicine is granted full accreditation

By ELIZABETH DUESENBERG

COLUMBIA, Mo. - The MU School of Medicine announced on Friday that the school was provided full accreditation through the 2023-2024 academic year.

A spokesperson for the school said that the Liaison Committee on Medical Education accepted their status report that was provided in December 2017.

The committee recognized the school's progress and expressed appreciate for its efforts.

The school previously established a permanent LCME oversight committee that consisted of faculty, staff and students.

“We are pleased with the LCME’s decision, which recognizes the progress we’ve made as a school,” said Patrick Delafontaine, MD, Hugh E. and Sarah D. Stephenson dean of the MU School of Medicine. “Our medical education program has benefited from the LCME’s detailed and thoughtful feedback. I am grateful for the faculty, staff and students who have contributed along the way to develop and implement comprehensive action plans.”
#Mizzou wrestling safe after Central Michigan University shooting

By: Bill Pollock

The University of Missouri wrestling team is safe and accounted for following a shooting on the campus of Central Michigan University that killed two people.

Mizzou is in Mount Pleasant, MI this weekend for the MAC wrestling tournament. CMU is hosting the tournament.

Central Michigan University issued a statement naming James Eric Davis, Jr. as a person of interest. Authorities continued to search for him early Friday afternoon.

Missourinet has reached out to the conference in regards to any potential schedule changes.

MU wrestling team safe at hotel away from Michigan campus shooting

Watch video at: http://mms.tveyses.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a06f666e-f3d5-44ed-a83a-832a7b6cc61d

Similar stories also ran on KRCG and KCTV(Kansas City).
The unregulated world of 'emotional support animals' is driving airlines crazy — and science is on their side
By: Hillary Brueck

Generated from News Bureau press release: Study Reveals Recommendations for Certifying Emotional Support Animals


People have been bringing all sorts of "support animals" into public places recently, arguing the creatures should be allowed to fly on planes and come into offices or restaurants because they serve a mental-health purpose.

But what does an emotional support pet actually do, and does the designation really mean anything?

Forensic psychologist Jeffrey Younggren from the University of Missouri put it bluntly to Business Insider: Scientists don't know if such pets do anything "other than make somebody happy," he said.

Younggren has spent years studying the growing trend of clients asking their therapists to sign letters certifying that they need an emotional support animal.

"The research is quite inconsistent on whether the animals really do anything at all," Younggren said.

But despite that lack of evidence, many therapists are signing "ESP" letters for their patients these days, without even seeing the animals in action.

"How can you say the animal does something if you've never seen them with a patient?" Younggren said.

As more such letters get signed, more people are using the designation to let their pets fly on planes with them for free. And airlines have seen a huge spike in in-flight problems. Animals have been peeing, defecating, biting, and in one case mauling people on board Delta planes. The company reported an 84% increase in incidents involving unruly animals since 2016.
On March 1, Delta started requiring anyone flying with an emotional support pet to sign a waiver stating that the animal can behave on a flight. The airline is also initiating other restrictions, including requiring proof of vaccination for emotional support pets and only accepting certification letters from a doctor or mental health professional. (In the past, travelers could easily pay for such a letter online.) United is also upping its policies, ABC News reported.

**What is an emotional support animal?**

There's not really any regulation about what constitutes an emotional support pet, and people can buy their way into a designation pretty easily online for around $70.

Researchers in California looked at more than a decade of records of registered "assistance" dogs and found that from 1999-2012 there was a huge uptick in the number of smaller dogs, older dogs, and dogs used for psychiatric and medical assistance in the state. Those researchers argued that their study revealed a growing trend of "misunderstanding" and "misuse" of support dogs.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a service animal must be trained to perform tasks for a person with a disability, be it physical or psychiatric. Disabilities include things like being blind or deaf, using a wheelchair, relying on a dog to remind you to take meds, or having a dog around in case of an anxiety attack.

Under federal law, only dogs and miniature horses weighing less than 100 pounds qualify for the "service animal" designation.

These trained animals are on the job and allowed to accompany their humans anywhere that members of the general public can go (including businesses, hospitals, and just about anywhere that's not a sterile operating room).

But the law is very clear: "Service animals are working animals, not pets." The ADA even spells out that "dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA."

The Fair Housing Act, however, is a bit more lenient: It says that US tenants have a right to keep "assistance animals," including emotional support pets, in their homes even if a leaser has a strict no-pets policy.

Therapy dogs are a third category of animal, and they're trained to help calm patients down during therapy sessions, usually in clinical settings.

**Animals can help people feel better, but they have to be trained**

People who train and certify dogs to work with patients are worried about the growing number of untrained pets flying around on planes.

Alice Smith, a client services coordinator at the PAWS dog training center in Florida, told Business Insider that untrained pets are giving real service dogs a bad name.
"There are people who just wanna be able to take their dogs with them everywhere, and they go online and buy a vest," Smith said. She added that if owners don't put in the six months to a year required to train an animal, the dog can end up barking and acting out in public.

However, Smith believes dogs can be a huge help for people dealing with anxiety and depression. As a pet owner herself, she said she's benefitted from having dogs around when she's upset.

"My dogs have just known it," she said. "They would come over to me, and get close to me, and as soon as I would pet them, I would calm down."

Smith said there are likely many other people who'd benefit from having a furry, well-behaved friend nearby. In recent weeks, she said she's fielded calls from students in Florida who are scared about getting on the bus after the recent school shooting and think a support dog might help. Other kids call the training center because they're getting bullied and want an emotional support dog to help them get through the day safely. Dogs can also help guide their owners to exits in a panic, or just lean into a person to calm them down in a crowd.

"They can feel that dog's pressure, and know the dog's there," Smith said.

But Younggren pointed out that some people are afraid of dogs or allergic to them. For those individuals, a flight alongside an emotional support pet could be an anxiety- or illness-provoking experience.

It boils down to a simple, well-known problem, he said: "People who love dogs think everybody loves dogs."

**Missourian**

**Thompson Center researchers develop social curriculum for students with autism**

NICOLE SCHROEDER Mar 2, 2018 (0)

Generated from News Bureau press release: [MU online curriculum helps children with autism develop better social skills](https://link-to-website)

For students with autism and other social challenges, learning social skills can be crucial. Janine Stichter at MU's Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment Disorders has emphasized this in her team's development of the new classroom curriculum, iSocial.
iSocial is a social competence curriculum for students who struggle with everyday interactions. It was developed over the past 10 years through research and trials in clinical and educational settings. The iSocial curriculum is unique in that it provides lesson plans tailored to all grade levels and can exist as both a paper-and-pencil curriculum and a virtual learning environment.

Autism spectrum disorder is defined by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke as "a group of complex neurodevelopment disorders characterized by repetitive and characteristic patterns of behavior and difficulties with social communication and interaction." About one in 87 8-year-old children in Missouri was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in 2016, according to data from the Missouri Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Project.

Creating iSocial

The idea for the curriculum came about from a general need in the autism spectrum disorder community for ways to develop and maintain social competence and practice skills needed in day-to-day interactions, Stichter, a professor of special education, said.

"We kept seeing these kiddos who were learning academic skills, were learning how to function in environments, but they were missing some core skills that did not allow them to develop and maintain friendships, did not allow them to have positive successful interactions with their teachers, with their bosses," Stichter said. "So, we saw a huge need. Families and schools were talking about that and people were constantly contacting me asking me for curricula."

Now, following its success in these trials, as well as similar successes witnessed in multiple grant-funded control trials, the team is working with Nascent Stage Development LLC to make the curriculum commercially available for everyone.
The iSocial curriculum focuses on helping students develop in five categories of social interaction:

- facial expression recognition
- recognizing emotions and feelings
- sharing ideas
- maintaining conversations and turn-taking
- problem-solving
- Curriculum in the classroom

The 32 lessons are each about 45 minutes long. In both versions of the curriculum, these lessons involve plenty of practice interactions among students.

"Whether it's face-to-face, meaning more typical delivery, or VLE (virtual learning environment), every lesson has a little bit of instruction where the teacher is defining something, explaining something, and then there's some modeling going on, where there's either visual examples of it or an opportunity to model it — do what you see," Stichter said. "Then we create little activities and games that allow them to have structured practice with support so they're successful."

The virtual curriculum version works much the same way as the paper-and-pencil curriculum, Stichter said. Students can log into the iSocial program on their desktop computer and join other students logged on at the same time, in groups of about four to six at a time. Each student is able to set up and control his or her own avatar on the program. For each lesson, students listen to an explanation of a social skill, then use their avatar to engage with other students and practice the skill in a virtual setting.

Since the curriculum was licensed to Nascent Stage Development LLC, developers have also been working to incorporate other technological aspects in the future, said Bob Etzel, the owner of the development company in Missouri.
"We're calling it socialization for the next generation, and that's really where we're coming in," Etzel said. "Our value is in the technology. This is important in that, up to this point, children with ASD were trained with the same technologies that their grandparents used, so paper and binders and ink ... When we teach socialization skills, we're teaching them socialization skills by using the technologies that will be common in their lives."

**Looking ahead**

While the company is working on developing the technology in the following years, Etzel's company is also working to commercialize the iSocial curriculum. Currently, both the paper-and-pencil version and the virtual version of the curriculum are priced based on the size of the school and the number of students using the program, Etzel said. He estimated the average cost of either version of the curriculum to be about $5,000 a year.

In just the next month, the company expects to see interest and awareness of iSocial grow significantly. Beginning April 2, Etzel's company will partner with Sandbox and Co., a digital learning company in London that plans to make iSocial's curriculum the sole source for content on autism education on its site.

Even now, the program is garnering the attention of the autism spectrum disorder community. Etzel said a woman running a supplies company for affected children in New York City recently spoke to him about why she liked the iSocial curriculum.

"She said, 'God bless you for creating such a wonderful program. There's nothing for these children in high school except for squeeze balls and trampolines,'" Etzel said.

For Stichter, the biggest sign the iSocial curriculum is helping is in the students' progress in everyday social interactions.

"What we're seeing and what the families and teachers are telling us is that these kids are really able to generalize this skill set into other environments," Stichter said. "Families tell us for example about going to the annual family reunion and people saying, 'What happened to this
‘The Most Hated Person On Campus’: Why Some College Republicans Are Channeling Donald Trump

The president is dividing conservative students at a time when the GOP is working hard to recruit young people

By: Katy Steinmetz

Ariana Rowlands is like a lot of young conservatives these days. The chairwoman of the California College Republicans enjoys edgy memes, gun-range socials, needling liberals and President Donald Trump. “Trump is this tangible symbol we can look at and think, ‘I can do that too. I can say what I actually believe in,’” says the fiery 21-year-old senior at the University of California, Irvine. “Some people aren’t going to like me for it, but I can say it now. So I think he’s been incredible, especially for the College Republican movement.”

College campuses are like funhouse mirrors, reflecting society’s controversies in skewed proportions. So it’s no surprise that one year into the Trump era, quads across the U.S. are deeply divided about the direction of his presidency. The concerns aren’t just coming from liberals. Some young conservatives worry that Trump is damaging their ability to sell peers on the GOP’s ideas.

While Trump has bent the national party to his will, his approval rating among young Republicans has fallen. According to a recent poll from the Institute of Politics at Harvard’s Kennedy School, just 59% of college students who identify as Republicans approve of Trump’s job performance, down from 70% in early 2017 and far less than the 85% of Republicans who approve of his job performance overall. Researchers from Pew also found that young Republicans were more likely than older counterparts to have switched parties around the time of Trump’s election.

At the same time, Trump has a loyal base of millennial supporters who are digging in, speaking out and even emulating his controversial brand of politics. The 59% who see method in Trump’s
divisive style are generally louder than the 41% who are balking. Says Rowlands: “You need to be a little bit provocative … in order to get your message across.”

The one thing everyone on the right seems to agree on is that the GOP needs to draw more young voters into its tent. According to the Harvard poll, 38% of people aged 18 to 29 call themselves Democrats, almost twice the number on the other side. At a moment when millennials are superseding Boomers as America’s biggest voting bloc, that fact has supercharged the rush to shape the hearts and minds of the country’s youth. “What happens when people are in their late teens and early 20s sets them on a political course for the rest of their lives,” says Deborah Schildkraut, a political science professor at Tufts University.

Building on decades of work, a raft of well-funded conservative groups are flooding campuses to pitch students on their priorities, from activist groups like Turning Point USA, which vows to fight liberal bias and out left-wing professors, to the billionaire Koch Brothers, who are spending millions to bolster their free-market ideas in higher education. Left-leaning groups are piling on too. Lately, even white supremacist groups have joined the fray, putting up banners on campuses from Indiana to California in hopes of attracting disaffected white students who, like their non-white peers, feel their identities are under attack these days.

There is a prevailing sense that one must pick a team. “It truly is a battle that we’re fighting on campus,” says Joel Valdez, a campus coordinator for Turning Point USA at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign who has heckled anti-Trump protesters and ruffled peers by putting up signs that say “Socialism Sucks.” Other conservative students eschew such tactics, as well as the President. These tussles may foreshadow the fights to come over the shape of the conservative movement.

Rowlands’ political awakening began when she headed off to college. The daughter of immigrants from Mexico and Wales, she grew up in Orange County, Calif., a historic cradle of conservatism. But the county is evolving politically as its demographics change; it broke for a Democratic presidential candidate in 2016 for the first time since the Great Depression. When she enrolled at Irvine, Rowlands had friends that were “low key liberal.” Then one day in marketing class her freshman year, a peer made a comment about “how black people are systemically oppressed.” Rowlands disagreed, arguing that in America everyone has the same chance to succeed. Two Republicans observed the exchange and invited her to join their club. She says she was president by the next quarter.

Since then, Rowlands has contributed writing to Breitbart News and appeared on Fox News to decry the “war on Christmas.” She also brought former Breitbart firebrand Milo Yiannopoulos to her school, twice, and today describes herself as the most hated person on campus. “I’m definitely not well liked, and I think that’s great,” she says. “I don’t know these people and they hate me because I’m a Republican. And that really shows the hypocrisy of the left.”

Last year, Rowlands started to cast her sights beyond Orange County. She felt the “establishment” leadership of the College Republicans in the state were complacent and misguided in trying to reach out to left-leaners, so she decided to run for the position of chair. It
was the first contested election for the post in nearly a decade, and at times it got ugly: Rowlands accused the other side of trying to suppress her support and says pictures of her were decorated with swastikas and devil horns. As her opponent preached moderation as a way to grow numbers in liberal California, Rowlands told conservative students to stand their ground and stop apologizing when “social justice-y” peers are offended. She also refused to compromise in her full-throated support of Trump. In the end, the insurgent won a solid victory, taking over the job of overseeing all the chapters in the state.

Rowlands is hardly the only young Republican who says Trump is inspiring conservatives to push back against campus cultures of political correctness. For these students, the President’s provocative style of governing – from his Twitter missives to his attacks on institutions like the NFL – is as much a part of the appeal as the progress he’s made on policy. Brooke Paz, a College Republican at California State University, Fullerton, describes being scared to speak up in class for fear of social backlash or bad grades. And she says this feeling of marginalization has led people like her to embrace the President. “Trump is energizing for students right now because today being conservative is rebellious,” says Paz, who is also a Christian and anti-abortion advocate. Republicans may hold the scepters of power in D.C., she says, but “we are the ideological minority on campus. We’re the ones who are persecuted.”

It’s a widespread, decades-old complaint among conservative students who are in the numerical minority on many campuses. While 60% of Democratic students say they feel they can share their opinions on campus “without fear of censorship or negative repercussions,” according to the Harvard poll, only 25% of Republicans say the same. Many get a vicarious thrill from Trump flouting liberal institutions because they feel many professors and administrators are guided by (unacknowledged) liberal thinking, citing examples like a teacher in Orange County who called Trump’s election victory “an act of terrorism.”

Victoria Snitsar, a Trump supporter at the University of Kansas who recently won an election to become chair of the College Republicans in her state, points to a teacher who started wearing a bullet-proof vest to class as a form of protest when concealed carry was permitted for the first time on her campus last year. Chris Vas, president of the College Republicans at nearby Mizzou, says some teachers espouse opinions as fact. “There are courses at the University of Missouri that don’t even border on education,” he says. “It is simply indoctrination.”

(While it’s not clear how often leanings manifest as prejudice, one national survey found that 60% of college faculty say they lean left, compared to 13% who lean right.)

Many students say that Trump’s can’t-look-away presidency – and the near-constant opposition from liberal students – has energized conservative clubs on campus. The College Republican National Committee says they don’t actively audit chapters. But there are reports of new ones popping up in the wake of the 2016 election. Rowlands says she is in the midst of activating 11 new or lapsed chapters throughout California. And Turning Point USA leader Charlie Kirk says his organization has seen a “record amount” of new chapters started in the last year, bringing the number up to 450. The Trump presidency has certainly made politics a central part of campus life among a historically apathetic crowd, and that alone is proof enough to some young
Republicans that his style of politics makes sense. A little controversy can help broadcast the message.

“Trump isn’t a mainstream politician. He definitely strikes a different chord,” says Isaac Michaud, chair of the Maine Federation of College Republicans. “Seeing him want to shake things up and do things differently to try to help the country definitely opened up our eyes.”

This is not a universal view. Other College Republicans are actively distancing themselves from the President and say they can’t stomach his name-calling. In particular, young conservatives worry about Trump’s rhetoric on gender- and race-related issues. Millennials are the most diverse generation the U.S. has ever seen and Trump has managed to offend minority groups across the spectrum. “We’ve been trying to rebrand,” says Nathan Hogan, co-president of the College Republicans at Brigham Young University in Utah. “Trump really isn’t good for our party and the things he’s doing are only hurting our prospects in the long run.” Despite grumbling from some Trump supporters, Hogan’s group has been hosting friendly bipartisan events, like debate nights with the Democratic club on campus. He is part of a faction that believes reaching across the aisle is a better way to increase the ranks.

Where campus Republicans come down on Trump is partly a reflection of what school they’re attending, says sociologist Amy Binder, author of Becoming Right: How Campuses Shape Young Conservatives. The President is bound to be less popular at elite private schools, where College Republicans are part of smaller, closer-knit communities and have long avoided provocative displays like “Affirmative Action Bake Sales” in favor of high-brow policy talks. The Harvard chapter refused to endorse Trump in the 2016 election. At Yale, the board decided to support his nomination, but several members left in protest, arguing that the mogul was unfit to serve. Since then, says Ben Zollinger, the president of the Yale chapter, none of those members have returned and the group has decided to ignore “somebody who is so divisive on a campus where we struggle to attract members.”

On a warm January evening, Rowlands was standing at the back of a buzzing lecture hall at California State University, Fullerton, watching fellow College Republicans play bingo. It was one of the club’s first meetings of the semester, and the game was an ice-breaker exercise for the Trump era. The goal was to find members whose personal experiences matched the descriptions in each square. The phrases ranged from “is a minority” and “#MeToo” to “has been accused of having ‘white privilege’” and “is a self-proclaimed deplorable.” It was easy to find someone to check the box that said “Follows Trump on Twitter.”

In addition to Rowlands, the group had another visitor: a representative from the Congressional Leadership Fund, a super PAC connected to House Republican leadership that is dedicated to helping Republicans win seats in the chamber. The emissary, who was greeted with polite attention from the chatty students, was there to tell them about a special offer: knock on 5,000 doors in the midterms and they’ll give the club $1,000. Knock on 10,000 doors and get an additional $1,750.

These are small dollars compared to the cash that other outside conservative groups are pouring into campus projects. Like the students, these organizations use a range of tactics and represent
different factions in the conservative movement. Turning Point USA, a nonprofit that keeps quiet about its funders, has raised more than $10 million in the past year to train student activists and host conservative confabs. The group maintains a “Professor Watchlist” of faculty who are allegedly pushing “leftist propaganda” in the classroom.

Kirk, the group’s 24-year-old founder, describes himself as “close” with Trump’s sons, Eric and Donald, Jr., and laments that college students have told him they’ve not heard “one good thing” about Trump or his agenda in the classroom. “There’s a complete silencing of half of the entire country’s view of the world,” he says. “That’s really what bothers us and what we’re trying to change.” His group has also been working to get more right-leaning candidates into student governments and has been accused of improperly funneling money into such elections. (A spokesperson for the organization says that “any accusation we are breaking the law is fallacious and slanderous.”)

At some five years old, Turning Point is a relative newcomer to the campus wars. Young America’s Foundation, founded in 1969, has spent upwards of $18 million on programs in recent years and is currently touting a campus speaking tour by conservative commentator Ben Shapiro, who routinely dismisses liberal college students as “snowflakes” who demand “safe spaces” where they can hide from uncomfortable ideas. Foundations associated with the billionaire Koch brothers, meanwhile, have increased higher-education spending from about $35 million in 2014 to more than $100 million last year, supporting projects at hundreds of universities and colleges across the country. They have funded grants to promote the hot-button issue of free speech and fellowships for PhD candidates in economics. An investigation by the Center for Public Integrity highlighted their work supporting research centers that do academic study bolstering their laissez-faire policy goals.

(Disclosure: Time Inc., TIME’s parent company, has been acquired by Meredith Corp. in a deal partially financed by Koch Equity Development, a subsidiary of Koch Industries Inc.)

Schildkraut, the Tufts professor, says that people are too quick to assume the youth vote is a lost cause for Republicans simply because young people are diverse and skew liberal on issues like LGBT rights. Some traditional conservative positions, like opposing legalized abortion, find significant support among young Americans. And some College Republicans are trying to make room for more progressive thinking on issues like climate change within their party.

Schildkraut also highlights studies suggesting that young white people may react to changing demographics and an accompanying sense of “group threat” by embracing conservative policy positions on issues ranging from immigration to healthcare. The number of young Americans across all ethnic groups who believe their race is under attack “a lot” increased in the last year, up to nearly one-third, according to the Harvard poll. For some, that feeling can add appeal to a party where there is less laser-focus on current and historical inequalities. Many young Republicans accuse liberal peers of being too quick to label Trump supporters as bigots, and cast Democrats as the intolerant side. (A student at the Fullerton meeting, who described himself as a former Democrat, explained his defection in part by pointing to an op-ed about a black mother questioning whether her children could be friends with white people.)
When asked about white-nationalist groups like Identity Evropa that are trying to capitalize on status anxiety among white students, the young Republicans interviewed for this article routinely denounced them. According to the Anti-Defamation League, promotional materials from such groups, like leaflets and posters, have showed up on more than 200 campuses since September 2016. It’s not clear that they’re drawing many new recruits, but it adds to the building feeling of dread. “The alt right just kind of wants to see the world burn,” Rowlands says.

At Fullerton, the College Republicans are excited for the midterms. They’re ready to tout the passage of tax reform, the way Trump is reshaping the judiciary and his hard line on immigration — however distracting his tweeting might be. As conservative students experiment with emulating the President’s style as well as a more restrained brand of conservatism, much of what they learn will depend on how the rest of his presidency shakes out.

Chandler Thornton, the chair of the College Republican National Committee, says his primary aim these days is to “grow the party and help Republicans win young voters.” When asked if Trump is making this harder or easier, he doesn’t answer directly. “He is bringing a lot of excitement,” Thornton says, “which is necessary.” Since 2016, he says he’s traveled to dozens of states to meet with students and found them deeply engaged in the daily churn of America’s political process. “To that end,” he says, “the President is really helping our cause.”

Katy Steinmetz is a senior writer for TIME based in San Francisco.

College Admissions: Preparing to Test Your Abilities

By: Pete Musto

Listen to the story: https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/college-admissions-advice-test-preparation/4277857.html

For many would-be college students, testing is the most difficult part of the undergraduate application process.

Applicants sit for hours taking tests. They answer questions about a number of subjects, sometimes providing answers both in writing and by saying them out loud.
In some countries, a single test result can be the only thing college or university officials consider when deciding whether or not to admit a student.

But that is not true everywhere. Ryan Griffin says that in the United States, test scores are only part of what school officials consider.

Griffin is head of International Admissions at the University of Missouri, a public research university in Columbia, Missouri. He notes that many schools have changed their thinking about this part of the application.

Griffin says a growing number of U.S. colleges and universities let applicants choose whether or not they want to take a standardized test, such as the SAT or ACT. He told VOA the University of Missouri does not require international applicants to provide results from either test.

Why? The College Board, a higher education group, created the SAT in 1926 as a way of fairly measuring a student’s academic abilities and critical thinking skills. A university professor created the ACT in 1959 so as to offer a different method for rating college applicants. But Griffin says research has since shown the two tests are not as fair as was once thought, especially for students in need of financial help.

Colleges and universities have come to recognize that tests like the SAT and the ACT usually help students with experience in the U.S. education system. Additionally, official testing centers are available in some, but not all areas. They can be difficult to reach and costly for some applicants.

Still, Griffin says, if a student decides to apply to a school that does require a standardized test score, there is a lot to consider. Both the SAT and the ACT are divided into different parts.

Both tests have areas that measure a student’s abilities in mathematics, where they must choose the best answer to a question.

Standardized tests also require students to demonstrate their ability to understand a reading and express themselves in writing. But unlike the SAT, the ACT has a part with questions about science.

Schools usually prefer one standardized test over the other and will clearly state which of the two they want applicants to take, says Griffin. The different parts of both tests have their own test scores. And he thinks that students should consider taking either test more than once.
“There’s going to be some anxiety as far as sitting down for this test for the first time,” Griffin told VOA. “So it can be a good chance for the student … to feel as though they then have a better understanding … for their second attempt.”

Most Americans take the SAT or ACT in the spring of their next to last year in high school. If students decide to re-take the test, Griffin suggests doing so in the autumn of their final year.

Some colleges will only accept a student’s most recent test score. But another reason he says students should take either one more than once is that some schools will accept the highest score from both attempts. And if, for example, a student scores higher in math the first time they take the SAT, but higher in writing the second time, some schools will combine the higher numbers. Students can often ask schools how they weigh these scores, or read about their methods on the schools’ websites.

There are many test preparation books and classes available to people interested in paying for them. But Griffin says the best test preparation is to be well-rested the night before and calm the day of the test.

“It’s … important for students … to be confident in their knowledge, so that when they sit down to take the test there’s not an extra level of … pressure that they’re putting on themselves,” he said.

However, academic tests are not the only ones students from non-English speaking countries will face. After World War II, U.S. schools needed a way of measuring the language abilities of the greatly increasing number of international students entering the country. So a test of English as a foreign language -- the TOEFL -- was created in 1964.

Another test for non-native English speakers -- the IELTS -- was created in 1980. The IELTS is mainly for use by English-speaking European colleges and universities. But Mark Algren says it is becoming more widely used in the United States. Algren is the executive director of the Center for English Language Learning at the University of Missouri.

Algren notes that like the SAT and ACT, the TOEFL and IELTS are similar, and schools usually prefer one over the other. They also both have individually scored parts. These measure a student’s abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English.

Like the academic tests, he says, there are many resources available to help applicants prepare themselves. But one of the best things any language learner can do is to take seriously the English language classes their school offers.
Outside of school, the best thing a student can do is read in English, notes Algren. All areas of language ability are important. But in a college environment, reading is the most commonly used language skill. And reading connects to the second most commonly used skill: writing.

“Read, read, read, read, read; because when you’re reading, you’re not only learning reading,” he said. “You’re learning vocabulary … You’re going to learn grammar.”

Unlike traditional standardized tests, Algren suggests students not take the TOEFL or IELTS more than once. Test results are considered acceptable for up to two years, and many schools, such as Missouri, only accept the most recent score.

Instead, Algren says, students should make use of internet-based practice tests. These will help student get used to the amount of time they have to complete these tests, and let them know where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

“Be truthful with yourself, because you do … get some idea of things you need to be working on,” he added.

Both Algren and Griffin agree that honesty is important, especially in testing. Schools have ways of looking at test scores to see if there is anything unusual about them that suggests a student cheated.

Also, in the case of language testing, many U.S. schools require international students to take an additional English ability test when they arrive. This to ensure that students are fully prepared to begin their studies.

I’m Pete Musto. And I’m Caty Weaver.

Pete Musto reported this story for VOA Learning English. George Grow was the editor.
Students in Charge

Galvanized by politics and holding the power of the purse strings, they’re making their voices heard

By Lawrence Biemiller

Are students suddenly wresting control of colleges away from trustees, administrators, and faculty members?

Some people have said so, loudly — among them people on both sides of the current political divide and others with no political ax to grind. On the right (often, but not always) are state legislators appalled by students’ desire for lazy rivers, climbing walls, and deluxe residence halls, as well as pundits horrified by their demands for trigger warnings, gender-neutral bathrooms, and bans on hate speech. On the left (not always, but often) are professors worried that their own students are reporting them for expressing political opinions in the classroom, and presidents made wary by rabble-rousing speakers.

But the real culprit may be immune to such complaining: Declines in the numbers of traditional-age students in parts of the country thick with colleges have left many tuition-driven institutions more or less at the mercy of students willing to pay ever-rising bills. Complaints may continue about lazy rivers, sushi bars in dining halls, and all-suite dormitories, but students and their parents appear willing to keep writing checks and taking out loans.

As anyone who remembers the sit-ins and other protests of the 1960s and 1970s can attest, it’s hardly unprecedented for students to come forward with demands for their colleges. And it would be difficult to claim that today’s students have been more successful in bringing about change than the generation that mounted nationwide protests against segregation, single-sex education, the Vietnam War, and apartheid.

Still, recent years have brought some of the highest-profile examples of successful student activism since the 1970s. Three years ago, during the peak of the Black Lives Matter protests, a graduate student at the University of Missouri at Columbia began a hunger strike to demand the ouster of the university system’s president, Timothy M. Wolfe, who the student said had done nothing to "shift the culture of Mizzou in a positive direction." Six days in, his protest attracted the support of some 30 members of the football team, who said they would neither practice nor play until the student’s demands had been met. The following day both Wolfe and the campus chancellor, R. Bowen Loftin, resigned.

Recently, the loudest campus disagreements have been over free-speech issues. The most prominent of these have been sparked by right-wing firebrands like Milo Yiannopoulos, whose campus appearances often require costly security arrangements and drag administrators, faculty
members, and students into debates from which, in an era of endless social-media firestorms, no one emerges unscathed.

Nor are college classrooms immune from free-speech disagreements. Some students complain that their classmates are "snowflakes" for requesting warnings before difficult subjects are mentioned, even though higher education is full of difficult subjects. Meanwhile, students concerned by what they believe are liberal tendencies among faculty members — a shrinking share of whom have the protections of tenure — can report them on websites like Professor Watchlist, which posts "names of professors that advance a radical agenda in lecture halls."

At the same time, other students — among them women, students of color, and LGBT students — say they want administrators to assure them that campuses are safe places for them to study and socialize, and they’re not shy about making their voices heard. They have not forgotten that Emma Sulkowicz, a Columbia University student disappointed by the institution’s response to her rape accusation against another student, attracted worldwide attention (though not success in court) by carrying a mattress around the campus in protest.

But where today’s young people have the most leverage — though they may not realize it — is in admissions. As state support of higher education has declined, public universities have become increasingly tuition-dependent — that is, more like many private colleges. Meanwhile, the decrease in the number of traditional-age students in many parts of the country has made the competition for applicants ever more challenging. A small college that misses its enrollment target by several dozen students is likely to be in for severe cost-cutting — particularly if it has bet on enrollment growth by, say, borrowing to build a new rec center in the hope that it would draw more students, and with them more revenue.

So colleges call in consultants like David Strauss, a longtime principal at the Art & Science Group, and ask them what the market wants. That's not a new development, he says, but he adds that "the ways colleges are willing to let the marketplace influence them are changing."

"Over the arc of time, higher education has been willing to say things that are what the market wants more than it has been willing to do things that the market wants," he says. More recently have come the climbing walls and lazy rivers, which have attracted plenty of media attention — "but those are things that are ancillary," he says. They may be what students think they want from institutions, and they may be expensive, he says, but they’re not central to colleges’ academic missions.

"The more interesting question is the extent to which colleges do things at the core of the academic mission that are market-reactive," he says. He’s talking about requiring the faculty to add or drop academic programs, for example, and maybe talking less about the liberal arts and more about competencies, skills, and career readiness.

For administrators, it’s a delicate balance between long-established missions and the latest market demands.
"If you do just what you think is right and put on blinders to the market, you’re going to get in trouble," Strauss says. But if all you do is what you think the market demands, "you can lose your soul — and lose your market anyway."

And some people point out that paying attention to what students need and want has always been part of what colleges do. "We listen to students," says Lori E. Varlotta, president of Hiram College, in Hiram, Ohio. Varlotta, who was previously vice president for planning, enrollment management, and student affairs at California State University’s Sacramento campus, also notes that Hiram is "not the Ritz-Carlton" — no lazy river, no climbing wall. "I wish we had some newer buildings," she says, but the college has managed to update some residence-hall bathrooms and lounges. And a simple fix that dealt with one of students’ biggest complaints "mitigated much of the concern about dorms."

What was it? Boosting the Wi-Fi signal.

**THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Top Producers of Peace Corps Volunteers, FY 2017**

By Chronicle Staff

The nine top producers of undergraduate-alumni Peace Corps volunteers in the 2017 fiscal year were all state flagship institutions. The smallest colleges that produced the most Peace Corps volunteers that year were Agnes Scott College, in Georgia, and Cornell College, in Iowa. Both had fewer than 1,000 undergraduate students in the fall of 2016.

**Large colleges (undergraduate enrollment of more than 15,000)**

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**Columbia city council set to devote thousands to STEM education**

By EVA CHENG


COLUMBIA - Students at Columbia Public Schools may start to see more learning opportunities at their schools if the city council approves a resolution Monday night.

The council will vote on whether to put $35,000 towards the Columbia STEM Alliance in order to support fields in science, technology, engineering and math. The money would help the alliance expand its programs.

Barry Dalton, community relations specialist for the Public Works Department, said the department recognized a need to support education in STEM-related subjects at local schools.

“We feel like investing in young people, particularly in the areas of engineering, and of course science, math and technology — which are often underserved — will pay dividends in the long run not just for public works, which depends upon engineering and technology, but the city and community as a whole,” he said.
Last September, President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum directing the Education Department to invest at least $200 million each year to promote STEM education nationwide.

Trump said in the memo, “Today, too many of our Nation’s K-12 and post-secondary students lack access to high-quality STEM education, and thus are at risk of being shut out from some of the most attractive job options in the growing United States economy.”

Bill Moore is the president of the Columbia STEM Alliance. He said the alliance is volunteer-driven and has relied solely on private donations. He said the city’s grant would allow the volunteers to develop activities like field trips, coding summer camps, robotics tournaments and other in-class and extracurricular activities.

Moore said the alliance has also been working to get microcomputers into the hands of about 1,800 middle schoolers to teach them about coding and programming. He said after completing a set of coursework provided by a UK-based program, the kids would receive a “micro:bit” — a piece of hardware product they could take home to start their own hands-on projects.

As a retired 3M executive with a background in engineering, Moore said the future looks bright for people pursuing STEM careers.

“They are usually well-paying jobs. There are exciting industries that are growing. So the opportunity is there, and the gap is there,” he said.

According to New American Economy, STEM fields before the year 2024 would be “adding almost 800,000 new jobs and growing 37 percent faster than the U.S. economy as a whole.”

Kate McKenzie is an industrial technology teacher at Jefferson Middle School. She also co-coaches the Fantastic LEGO Ladies, an all-girl competitive robotics team, for fourth through eighth graders.

McKenzie said the alliance is a group of community and business leaders in Columbia that have helped her team grow. She said the alliance volunteers have “a big-picture view” of the STEM industry across the city.

“They are looking at STEM integration from all different perspectives—not just educational robotics, but also in terms of what jobs are gonna be available when these kids graduate, what skills do they need when they graduate,” she said.

McKenzie said it would be “a good thing” for the alliance to manage the grant, as its programs could help prepare kids for the local job market.

“Sixty percent of high school graduates in Columbia stay in Columbia, and they need to have good jobs,” she said. “There are companies here who need good employees.”
Kevin Gillis is a bioengineering professor at MU. He also mentors a high school-level robotics team, the Army Ants. He said although the $35,000 grant is not enormous, it’s an important step the city is taking.

“Because it really is a sign, a symbol of the commitment of the City of Columbia to STEM education that will hopefully promote local industry and private donors to also kick in,” Gillis said.

Training focuses on mental illness first aid for youth

BY LAURA MISEREZ Mar 3, 2018 (2)

First aid training was on the program agenda, but not methods such as CPR or the Heimlich maneuver. Instead, the Youth Mental Health First Aid training focused on ways to help youth experiencing a mental health crisis.

Twenty-five people — including high school and college students, teachers and professors, parents, a pastor and a nurse — gathered Saturday at the MU Extension in Boone County. The program’s goals were to demystify mental health stigmas and to teach people how to provide immediate help in a mental health emergency.

The participants each earned a certificate upon completing the day-long training. The event was cohosted by the MU Extension in Cooper County and Children’s Grove, a local charity that supports young people’s mental and emotional health.

Sarah Traub, a human development and family science specialist based at the MU Extension in Cooper County, and Alejandra Gudiño, an officer for MU’s Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity, led the training. They followed a curriculum set by Mental Health First Aid, an international nonprofit that trains people to “identify, understand and respond to signs of mental
illnesses and substance use disorders.” The nonprofit also trains people to provide emotional support to people with a mental health or substance abuse problem.

Gudiño said they have offered the training to educators everywhere in Boone County except Columbia, where they hope to bring it soon.

She also said the idea is for people to have a conversation with and inspire hope in those they’re trying to help.

“Recovery is there, even in the most difficult cases,” Gudiño said. “Treatment is there.”

Both Traub and Gudiño stressed that the course is not meant to train people to diagnose mental illnesses, but rather how to care for people and help connect them with resources. Gudiño said she wants people to know how to talk to those suffering and “listen with good hearts and a little bit of information.”

During the training, participants talked about the importance of seeing mental illness the same way as physical illness.

“It’s important to have regular first aid because you don’t want to bleed out,” Katie Ensign, one of the participants, said. She said having mental health first aid is just as important, “because you don’t want to bleed out mentally either.”

Gudiño said this requires suspending judgment on others.

“We don’t judge people when they say, ‘Oh I have to go and put insulin because I have diabetes,’” she said.

Participants expressed various reasons for wanting to take the course.

Heather Dougan, a senior at Southern Boone High School in Ashland, said she has been waiting since last year to take it. She wants to be a social worker, and hopes this training will help her decide whether she wants to work with youth.
Molly Ring, an art teacher at Benton High School in St. Joseph and an MU graduate, said she came to learn more tools to use with her own students. In the seven years she has been teaching, she said she has adapted how she responds to her students’ behavioral issues.

“I want to get to the heart of what’s going on instead of being reactive,” Ring said. “Behaviors are usually not independent. There’s always something that’s a deeper cause.”

She also said she focuses on building relationships with students and doesn’t always make discipline the first step.

“The primary thing that helps me, even in a frustrating situation in the classroom, is approaching those situations with care — genuine care and concern — and trying to make that the first priority,” Ring said.

The course also covered the national prevalence of mental health issues among children. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 21 percent of 13- to 18-year-olds experience a severe mental disorder at some point, along with 13 percent of 8- to 15-year-olds.

Participants brought up several potential problems with data on mental health illnesses. They discussed how it can misrepresent certain age groups, genders and ethnicities because some of those groups may be less likely to report mental illness for a variety of reasons.

**Attorney Jim Turner returns to MU to talk about the civil rights era**

BECKIE JAECKELS

On a rainy day last April, former civil rights attorney Jim Turner met with MU journalism professor Berkley Hudson to view a photographic exhibit on race in 20th-century Mississippi.
Turner will return to his alma mater on Tuesday and Wednesday to talk about black voting rights and his experience enforcing federal laws in Mississippi and Alabama during the peak of the civil rights movement.

The talks are scheduled at the MU School of Law and the School of Journalism. He will be at John K. Hulston Hall at 1 p.m. Tuesday. His appearance at Reynolds Journalism Institute in Smith Forum is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Turner's first key prosecution with the U.S. Department of Justice involved four members of the Ku Klux Klan who killed Viola Liuzzo during the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965. He offers an insider’s view of the trials that took place over the following nine months, resulting in the conviction of all four killers.

This prosecution is the subject of his 2018 book, "Selma and the Liuzzo Murder Trials: The First Modern Civil Rights Convictions." The book intertwines newspaper articles, speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Lyndon B. Johnson, and Turner's own testimony of the end of Klan terror in the south.

Turner's career with the Justice Department spanned nine presidential administrations — from Eisenhower to Clinton. He served for 25 years as the department's Civil Rights Division’s deputy assistant attorney general.

He prosecuted Donald Trump for racial discrimination in the 1970s. The case, which addressed Trump's housing developments, was ultimately settled out of court.

Turner tried to prosecute the "Bloody Sunday" Alabama Highway Patrol in conjunction with the Selma to Montgomery march, but he was blocked by the grand jury's vote to not indict. Turner has made a total of four oral arguments before the Supreme Court.

The talks are free and open to the public. He will sign copies of the book after the talks. Turner will also visit Inman E. Page Library in Jefferson City on Thursday.
Stokes to become University of New Mexico’s 1st female president

By The Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — For the first time in the 129-year history of University of New Mexico, a female president is preparing to take the helm.

Named to the top spot in November, Garnett Stokes is scheduled to be introduced to campus Monday.

**Stokes, 61, accepted a five-year contract with a salary of $400,000 and comes to UNM from the University of Missouri, where she was provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs.**

“I am honored to be selected as the University of New Mexico’s new president,” Stokes said. “I am enthusiastic about what we can accomplish together to benefit UNM’s faculty, staff, students, and alumni.”

She takes over as the University of New Mexico and other New Mexico colleges grapple with funding shortages and enrollments that have generally trended downward. In addition, the university has faced criticism for its professor salaries and not doing enough to help some struggling programs like the journalism program.

The University of New Mexico also faces accusations of financial mismanagement in its athletics department. UNM football coach Bob Davie is also serving a 30-day suspension following multiple investigations that examined whether he and coaching staff interfered with criminal probes or misconduct cases involving players.

According to some reports, witnesses said Davie used racial slurs directed at black players — a charge he has denied.

Before being hired at Missouri, Stokes served as provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at Florida State University. In 2014, she served as that university’s interim
president and created a task force to address sexual and domestic violence. She also led the school’s diversity and inclusion committee on recruitment and retention while she was provost.

Graduate Professional Council gives students opportunity to share student loan stories with Missouri senators

By Regan Mertz

The Graduate Professional Council ran a booth in the MU Student Center on March 1 that allowed students to call Missouri senators regarding student loans.

Student loans are not subsidized, which means they accrue interest while the student is in school. Mike Hendricks, GPC director of state affairs, said graduate student loans also have higher interest rates than undergraduate student loans.

“The government is making most of its student loan profits off of graduate and professional students,” Hendricks said. “Graduate and professional students have higher interest rates on their loans and are not subsidized. Graduate students are only 13 percent of the borrowing population while the government receives 77 percent of its student loan profits from graduate and professional students. GPC and [the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students] have been working on several initiatives to equalize the undergraduate loans with graduate and professional student loans.”

Rachel Owen, GPC director of national affairs, said there were two things GPC was trying to accomplish by having students call Missouri senators: spread awareness and empower students.

“We are trying to make sure that students are aware of the changes senators and representatives are proposing to make with student loans and the repayment programs in Washington,” Owen said. “So awareness is our number one goal.”

By motivating students to make phone calls, Owen said senators and representatives in Washington will hear personal stories from the students about their loans.

“If the students are not telling their stories, then there are not a lot of other people who are,” Owen said. “We are trying to empower students to be able to make their voices heard.”

This push for student empowerment and awareness stems from the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.
HEA is legislation in Washington that sets policies for student loans, student loan repayment plans and campus safety, Owen said.

In order for the government to make decisions on HEA, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions requested stories and statements about policy reformations. The GPC and the Office of Graduate Studies worked together to develop a statement that will be passed on to the committee.

The statement calls for the establishment of “procedures that support master’s, doctoral and professional students in making informed financial aid decisions to reduce their borrowing and debt.”

The unequal student loan interest rate, in addition to the longer time spent in school beyond undergraduate education, makes life after graduation harder for graduate students.

“When graduate and professional students graduate, due to the debt from their loans, it makes it harder for them to buy a house, a car or pursue other big financial decisions because they are in so much debt,” Hendricks said.

Kristofferson Culmer, director of external affairs for NAGPS, said the cap on student loan interest rates for graduate students is 9.5 percent, while the cap for undergraduates is 8.25 percent.

Culmer compared the home loan interest rate, which is between 3-4 percent right now, to the interest rates for graduate students, which he said is currently at 5.5 percent.

“We would just like to see education loans at the same interest rate,” Culmer said. “The government can still make their money back in this way at a much lower rate.”

Owen and some members of GPC will be traveling to Washington this week to talk to Missouri senators and representatives about the statement.

Further plans for the GPC include enacting a larger campaign on campus to raise awareness among students in regard to what is happening with the HEA and undergraduate and graduate loans.
McCaskill jabs Hawley after he clears Greitens in secret messaging investigation

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U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill’s campaign pilloried Attorney General Josh Hawley on Friday after he cleared Gov. Eric Greitens’ office in an investigation into its use of a private messaging app.

The attacks from McCaskill’s campaign and other Democratic organizations signal how Hawley, the GOP's top recruit to challenge McCaskill in the 2018 Senate race, could be yoked to fellow Republican Greitens as the scandal-plagued governor grapples with investigations in Jefferson City and St. Louis.

McCaskill’s campaign noted that Greitens was not interviewed for the Confide investigation and that there was no forensic examination of the electronic devices used by the governor’s staff.

“He wasn’t even willing to challenge the Governor’s ability to hide behind ‘executive privilege.’ This wasn’t a real investigation,” Meira Bernstein, McCaskill’s spokeswoman, said in a statement. “How can any of his investigations be taken seriously after this?”

The governor’s office, which received a copy the report, announced the results of the investigation before a planned released by the attorney general’s office.

The governor's statement came shortly after Hawley’s office announced that it was opening a separate inquiry into the Mission Continues, a charity founded by the Greitens.

“The Attorney General's handling of this investigation and his decision to provide the report to the Governor and not the public has lost him all credibility with the people of Missouri,” Bernstein said.

Hawley’s office had previously provided Missouri Auditor Nicole Galloway, a Democrat, with a copy of an investigation into her office before releasing that to the wider public.

Loree Anne Paradise, spokeswoman for the attorney general's office, said executive privilege was asserted by the governor's office before investigators were in a position to even request an interview with Greitens.
The attorney general’s office has limited authority when investigating potential Sunshine Law violations in cases like these, she said.

“The Sunshine Law legislation recently filed in the House would address this issue in two ways,” Paradise said. “One, if would give the AGO subpoena power. Two, it would create criminal penalties, thereby giving us authority, for example, to involve the MSHP (Missouri State Highway Patrol).”

She also said that Hawley's office is "not aware of any mechanism for recovering Confide messages."

Hawley’s office interviewed eight Greitens staff members about their use of the private messaging app Confide after a series of stories published by The Star last year about the governor’s use of the app, which deletes texts after a recipient reads them.

The Greitens staffers maintained that they did not use the app for substantive public business. Hawley’s office accepted this testimony as credible, but also noted that because of the nature of Confide it could not find any evidence to corroborate or contradict it.

"Hawley has to walk a political tightrope,” said Peverill Squire, a political scientist at the University of Missouri. “As attorney general he cannot afford to be seen as going soft on Greitens. But as a candidate for the GOP senate nomination he can ill afford to alienate a swath of Republican voters.”

Supply of Students Is Up Nationally, But Some Regions Face Scarcity

By Lawrence Biemiller

The supply of American high-school graduates continues to shift southward and to the west, but colleges — except for those that have closed altogether — remain where they’ve always been. Many colleges and universities are stuck in the Northeast and the upper Midwest, and many of those institutions are scrambling to identify what they can afford to offer students in the way of program or facility improvements, or both. The seven-campus University of Maine system, for example, will have to contend with a 14-percent decline in the number of high-school graduates through 2032. And the problem is even more acute for many small colleges.

"In general our bricks and mortar were mostly built in the Northeast, moving down to the Southeast," says Mary B. Marcy, president of Dominican University of California, who wrote an Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges report in 2017 about small-college survival. "To the degree that there is growth in the college-going population, it’s going to be in the Southwest. This is one of the biggest challenges facing small private colleges around the country. And it’s on us right now — many institutions are seeing it this year in enrollment, and it’s projected to continue."

Smaller institutions typically respond not with fancy amenities but with academic overhauls. Sweet Briar College, rescued by alumnae after it nearly closed in 2015, recently unveiled a new curriculum focused on women’s leadership and contemporary issues like data and sustainability. Hiram College purchased iPads for all its students — and also hiking boots, for a program it’s calling "Tech and Trek."

According to forecasts by the National Center for Education Statistics, 34 states are expected to have more high-school graduates in 2025-26 than they did in 2012-13. These include a broad band of states from Texas to Washington and Minnesota and another band from Florida to Maryland. New York, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, and New Mexico can anticipate more modest increases.

But the New England states, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Michigan — all fairly dense with colleges — face declines of 5 percent or more. Populous California is expected to see a lesser decline.
Colleges in the North and East can, of course, try recruiting in the South and West. But many, without big endowments, lack the resources for full-scale recruiting campaigns in parts of the country where they have no name recognition, Marcy says.

"It’s not just the numbers — it’s actually the profile of students that is changing," she adds. Students graduating from high school now are more diverse — in particular, they’re likelier to be Hispanic — and more likely to come from lower-income and first-generation families. Such students are also more likely to prefer staying close to their families, and less likely to have been raised thinking of a small-college campus as the ideal.

"That pool of students that we traditionally think of as the college-going student," Marcy says, "is shrinking pretty significantly."

Nationally, NCES said, the number of high-school graduates increased 22 percent from 2000-1 to 2012-13, growing from 2.8 million to 3.5 million, but is expected to grow more slowly in the years ahead, reaching 3.7 million by 2025-26.

Still, the numbers aren’t all terrible: Between 2000 and 2014, total enrollment in postsecondary institutions rose 32 percent — to 20.2 million, up from 15.3 million, according to the NCES. Enrollment by students age 25 and older increased somewhat faster than that by traditional students, although they still make up most of the market.

Enrollment is projected to increase an additional 15 percent from 2014 to 2025.