Asst. Cuts Proposed at Grad Forum

Ever since the Student Government Association (SGA) forum on February 19, graduate students at the University of Missouri—St. Louis have had a reason to be nervous. At the forum, Dean of the Graduate School Christopher Spilling announced that the graduate school will be making cuts to some scholarships as part of their measures to alleviate UMSL’s budget deficit.

To go over the proposed plan for these cuts with the graduate students, Spilling, along with Associate Dean of the Graduate School Wesley Harris, invited graduate students to a forum on March 1. The forum was structured similarly to the February 19 forum, with a short talk from Spilling followed by a question-and-answer session.

Spilling started his talk by explaining the numbers of the tuition remission problem. According to Spilling, the graduate school is allocated $1.86 million for tuition remission. However, because the number of students receiving tuition remission has increased, the graduate school is overspending that budget by $600,000. Due to the university’s debt, Spilling was unable to get the

Could Mars Be Our Next Home Planet?

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GAME CORNER

The UMSL MATH CLUB Presents Problem of The Week

Problem: What is the number?

Three times a positive number, plus seven
Is multiplied then by eleven
Then subtracted is twenty
And times two should be plenty
To get the square of the number, less ten.

Difficult: MissingNo.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I found that the chancellor is an everyman touting the virtues of austerity, which would be a fine idea, if the cuts were applied to the right expenses. Laying off faculty and staff, eliminating tuition-free graduate programs, constructing expensive buildings, cutting the maintenance budget, and much more that I'm sure the chancellor didn't cover in those two pie graphs posted on the website. Frankly, I am insulted. Would you mind elaborating on what is in the “Other” expense category? 26% seems like a significant piece of the pie, after all. What will the deficit be next semester? $18 million? $20 million?

The graduate program tuition remission is being phased out, as if to say to the students, “Find a different school that actually considers your contributions worth something.” You speak about a drop in enrollment. Have you done the math on this one? 22% of the school’s total population is comprised of graduate students. What will happen to our award-winning research facilities without lab and teaching assistants?

You claim to not know the cause of UMSL’s deficit. Why didn’t we start cutting back earlier? “I wish we had. I don’t know what to say to you. It went quickly.” I wish we had, too. Ten employees, whose salaries we students could never dream of, earn over $200,000 per year. I take out $6,000 in federal loans per semester to be able to attend UMSL. I know I’m not the only one. I have 2 years until I graduate. I’d like to complete my undergraduate education at this university. Will there still be professors left to teach next year? My future is in the hands of the administration. I thought maybe I could be the master of my own destiny for once?

But hey, at least I get a $30 printing allowance.

Regards,

Renee Kocsis

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- Follow us on Twitter @UMSLTheCurrent
Graduate Student Assistantship Cuts

JESSIE EIKMANN
STAFF WRITER

Continued from Page 1

administration to make up this $600,000 differential. “So what we’ve done is basically looked at the university’s strategic plan, and we’ve aligned the priority expenditures for the dollars for tuition remission,” said Spilling.

The proposed plan for the fall semester would prioritize graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs) and graduate research assistantships (GRAs) for tuition remission over other assistantships. Spilling also emphasized that the plan would prioritize existing contracts over new applicants. “We won’t necessarily have to reduce the number of positions that we can give tuition remission for, but we want to do it in a controlled way so that we can honor contracts that people already have…In the future, there will be less positions available that the graduate school will provide tuition remission for,” he said. In order to honor existing contracts, the money will come from either the individual departments or the graduate school.

Harris added that the graduate school would also be capping enrollment to nine credit hours per semester so that students in 60 credit-hour Ph.D. programs would need to take 80 or 90 credit hours to complete their program. “We’re going to try to reduce those kinds of costs so that we can use those savings to try to supplement some of these other positions that might otherwise be cut,” he said.

An additional problem that the graduate school faces is the issue of residency. Tuition remission for out-of-state or international students costs more because these students pay more than the in-state rate for tuition, and the graduate school must make up that cost differential. Spilling indicated that there were 35 students that already qualified for residency and encouraged the graduate students to see if they qualified for residency.

The forum was then opened up to student questions. Several of the questions were from students concerned that they were not offered multi-year contracts, which left them questioning their financial situations. As one student put it, “Most of us, in case you don’t know, do not have contracts for next semester, so what you’re saying is most people in this room…we don’t know whether we’re going to have financing for next year or not…It has a big impact on us that all of a sudden…we’re informed that we don’t have financing.” Another student added, “There’s lines in our contract that don’t secure permanency…You talk about these cuts being over the next three years. How do I know in my very last year of my Ph.D. program that I’m still going to get funded?” Spilling stated that students with existing contracts would continue to be covered as long as they were making progress on their degree program.

Two of the international students were concerned that the residency problem would affect admissions decisions for future international students. Spilling replied, “The differential between resident and non-resident tuition lies with financial aid, and that’s running a deficit, too…so it’s not just international students, but non-resident versus resident, whatever we say applies equally across the board for that.”

Several graduate students expressed that they did not feel they were given enough notice about the changes in funding. For example, one student related that she received a letter in December offering her tuition remission, “Spilling stated that students with existing contracts would continue to be covered as long as they were making progress on their degree program.

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For more information, visit the current.org

Cygnus Helps UMSL’s Initiative to Understand Donors

KAT RIDDLE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Continued from Page 1

Coming 12-month period. Most important, each edition of the survey features an investigation of donors’ opinions about certain fundraising themes and issues that impact philanthropy so that development professionals and not-for-profit leaders can adjust their practices to meet donors’ changing needs and preferences.

The Cygnus Applied Research, which is nationally recognized for its work in studying philanthropy, Lorf said, “We thought if we had the opportunity to better understand what donors are thinking in America, and more specifically what our donors are thinking about, that could be helpful to us in terms of working with our donors. Of course with supporting very important things at the university.”

The Cygnus Applied Research group sends out thousands of emails to groups and organizations for this survey. They obtain about 40,000 responses in return to analyze and publish their study.

Leifeld said, “But what’s helpful to this survey is that UMSL is donor centered in our outlook. What I mean by that is that we try to bring the needs, aspirations, and goals of the university to our donors. But we are always mindful of the fact that donors have passions and interests of their own that matter to them. This will give us insight into what donors are caring about right now.”

Donors had until March 3 to fill out the survey. Leifeld said, “Hopefully a meaningful number of our own alumni will fill out the survey, to which we will get summary information. There will be no responses that we would be able to identify.”

The summation should be available for UMSL to use sometime in the fall. Leifeld said, “The better we understand our donors, the better we are able to frame our conversations about philanthropy and support for the university.”

To donate to UMSL or find out more information about the donation process, go to giving.uml.edu.

Continued online at thecurrent-online.com

Cygnus Helps UMSL’s Initiative to Understand Donors

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Campus Crime Report

SARAH HAYES
A&E EDITOR

The following is a series of daily crime reports issued by the University of Missouri—St. Louis Police Department since February 26.

February 26: At 12:30 p.m. in the Recreation and Wellness Center, a student reported that their shoes had been stolen from the men’s locker room.

February 28: At 1:07 a.m., UMSL PD assisted Normandy PD in finding a suspect in a car burglary case that had occurred in the Metrolink UMSL South parking lot. An auto accident was reported at 1:30 p.m. at the Normandy Golf Course; it was a one-vehicle accident with minor damage and no injuries.

February 29: UMSL PD responded to a check the welfare call at Oak Hall at 12:43 a.m. after a student was unable to get in contact with a friend who resided there. The PD found the student to be in order and a report was filed. At 8:30 a.m., a student was transported from the Millennium Student Center (MSC) to the hospital after reporting stomach pains. At 2 p.m., a student in Benton Hall reported that cash had been stolen from their room. At 10:57 p.m., a debit card which had been found at the Thomas Jefferson Library was turned in to UMSL PD for safe keeping; the owner has also been notified.

March 1: At 2:14 p.m., an UMSL staff member requested property from a report previously filed at the campus police station. At 4 p.m. in the Research Building, a student reported the theft of a computer tablet.

March 2: A student came into the UMSL police station at 2 p.m. to report a fraudulent charge to their student account. At 4:50 p.m., a wallet was found and turned in to the UMSL PD for safe keeping. At 11:50 p.m. at Mansion Hill, a tenant unaffiliated with the college reported an ex-boyfriend who was violating an ex-parte order. A delayed report of an allegedly homeless person residing there.

March 3: Two health-related reports: at 12:03 p.m., an employee was taken from Express Scripts to the hospital after complaints of lightheadedness; at 12:37 p.m., a student was transported from the MSC to the hospital after reports of labor pains. During the day, several items were found and turned in to the UMSL PD for safekeeping.

Continued online at thecurrent-online.com
‘Spotlight’ on Investigative Reporting

SHANNON GEARY
FEATURES EDITOR

The 2015 acclaimed film “Spotlight,” winner of the Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay, follows the story of the Boston Globe reporters who uncovered the scandal of child molestation in the Catholic Church, forever changing it. “Spotlight” was released on DVD and Blu-Ray on February 23 and in honor of reporters and the power of journalism The Current sat down with our own academic advisor and news writing teacher Ryan Krull to discuss the power and potential of investigative journalism.

The Current (TC): What do you believe the value of journalism is in today’s society?

Ryan Krull (RK): Let me answer a slightly different question than the one you asked and say why journalism is a great thing to get into in college even if you don’t want to go work in news after you graduate. Writing for the news is analogous to a baseball player before stepping to the plate, taking a few practice swings with a weighted bat. If you can write informatively on a multi-faceted societal issue or cover a complicated event, then writing those research papers or emails or memos or whatever it is you end up writing in your day to day life will seem so much easier. Journalism is a great way to build those critical abilities of writing and clear communication.

And that is just on the mechanical side of things. Most writing outside of news writing is from your own point of view. But writing for a paper forces you step outside of yourself. You have to talk to other people—usually strangers—and understand their perspectives. You’re telling other people’s stories, and in doing so you just naturally grow your own empathy and emotional intelligence.

TC: Do you believe that investigative journalism is beneficial? Why?

RK: Most definitely. In the past decades the number of journalists in the U.S. has declined significantly while the number of people working in advertising and public relations has increased by leaps and bounds. God knows how many press releases are generated for every one hard news story written. Nothing is intrinsically bad about public relations (PR), but too often overworked journalists give in to the temptation to essentially reprint a press release and then try to write and call it a news story. Often times this is more or less innocuous, but it can also lead to a situation in which those who ought to be held accountable are instead controlling the coverage and narrative.

There will always be reporters with resources keeping entities like, say, Apple (and the FBI) honest, but what about the local school board? Or a rural municipality’s three member police force? It’s the local terrain where the investigative piece is sorely needed.

TC: Is there any situation, real or hypothetical, in which a journalist might overreach/overstep bounds in their search for the truth? Do the ends justify the means?

RK: Great question. Anyone interested in this question should check out the podcast Radiolab, specifically the episode “The Fact of the Matter.” In a nutshell: this particular episode explores whether or not chemical weapons were used in a small village in Laos. A man who says he witnessed their use is grilled by a reporter, re-traumatizing him over what is perhaps little more than an historical footnote. It’s hard to say in this case if the reporter did too much. What makes for interesting food for thought.

TC: Can you think of any particularly important contributions that investigative journalism has made (beyond the subject covered in the film)?

RK: Too many to count just in recent history. Think about “Serial” or the podcast Radiolab, or investigative reporting on the NSA’s secret wiretaps to the podcast “Serial” to “Making a Murderer.” Investigative reporting is an umbrella term, underneath which a lot of really interesting stuff is happening.

TC: Finally, is there anything you can tell us about your personal experience with journalism? Any fun anecdotes or moments that meant a lot to you?

RK: After graduating from UMSL I worked for about a year for a hyper-local news site called Patch. I covered the Manchester-Town and County area. I attended a lot of city council meetings. I covered one of those off-year elections. But I also did a story about a police officer who rescued a man from a burning car. I wrote a lot of profiles about local entrepreneurs. Really, the best thing for me personally was just building a rapport with a really diverse group of people. It’s an invaluable life skill.

The Current would like to thank Krull for agreeing to this interview and everything that he does as our advisor.
The Arianna String Quartet Performs

As if one internationally renowned string ensemble was not enough, Friday night’s concert at the Touhill Performing Arts Center combined the forces of the resident Arianna String Quartet and the visiting St. Petersburg Quartet in an event aptly named “Octet!”

Founded in 1985, the Grammy nominated St. Petersburg Quartet has since traveled the world performing for audiences and prize committees. The quartet’s members include: first violinist and founding member Alla Aranovskaya; violinist Luis Salazar Avila; violinist Boris Vayner. The Cuban born cellist Thomas Mesa filled the absence of the quartet’s fourth member, cellist Leonid Shukayev.

Together with the four members of the Arianna String Quartet (violinists John McGrosso and Julia Sakharova, violist Joanna Mendoza, and cellist Kurt Baldwin), the St. Petersburg Quartet presented a night of chamber music that ranged from exhilaratingly beautiful to poignantly haunting.

The night began on familiar footing as the Arianna String Quartet played a piece from Beethoven’s middle period, the “Harp” quartet, Op. 74, in E Flat Major. Composed in 1809, this Beethoven quartet features only echoes of the daring stylistic innovations that are famously characteristic of his “Late Quartets.”

Indeed, an interesting aspect of this piece is its harkening back to the compositions of Beethoven’s one-time teacher, Joseph Haydn (even if Beethoven would have resented the comparison). Like many of Haydn’s quartets, Beethoven’s Op. 74 offers several opportunities for the expressive development of the cello, an instrument that was once limited to only a supporting role in not only symphonies but even chamber music.

The Arianna String Quartet took full advantage of this opportunity, and cellist Kurt Baldwin did not hesitate to command the presence of a rich, resonant sound. This was especially the case in the third movement, an ebullient prelude that was doubtlessly one of the most riveting moments of the night.

After swapping spots with the Arianna quartet, the St. Petersburg quartet took the stage to perform a piece whose historical context bears the mark of a tumultuous period of Russian/Soviet history. As first violinist Aranovskaya explained in a detailed introduction to the piece, Dmitri Shostakovich’s 11th quartet in F minor, Op. 122, is in many ways a piece of sorrow, sadness, and pain. Placing the quartet’s composition in the context of Stalin’s oppressive regime and the death of Shostakovich’s close friend Vasily Shirinsky, Aranovskaya explained the unique opportunity Shostakovich found in music: “He wanted to say much more than he was allowed to say ... [in his music] you can hear and know everything that he tried to say all his life.”

Aranovskaya’s introduction and Kurt Baldwin’s comments in the program notes helped place Shostakovich’s piece in context—a context without which the quartet may come off as only passingly “interesting.” Indeed, as Aranovskaya intimated in her closing statements, the quartet is hardly one that audiences can anticipate to “enjoy” in the standard sense of the word; rather, one must listen with empathy to the painful story told in order to come away with an experience of lasting value.

In this regard, the St. Petersburg Quartet performed spectacularly, convincingly evoking the composer’s pain through meticulous articulation of dissonant and haunting rhythms and sounds.

For the final piece, both quartets joined one another to perform Mendelssohn’s String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 40. Anyone who had never before heard an octet performed live—and maybe even some who had—were likely as astounded by how gracefully two quartets could achieve a unity of expressiveness.

The most exciting aspect of the piece, and one which the two quartets channeled effectively, is Mendelssohn’s subtle tributes to the Baroque period. In the final movement especially, the cellos, violin, and viola all participated in a rolling fugue that could have been penned by Bach himself were he exposed to the string octet as a suitable form of composition. Echoes of one of the Baroque’s favorite musical forms, the concerto grosso, also abounded, with the violins nearly playing the virtuosic lines of a concerto with the supporting ripieno and continuo of the violas and celli.

As is usual for the Arianna String Quartet, Friday night’s performance brought music of the highest professional caliber to the Touhill audiences. For those interested in hearing the Mendelssohn octet performed again, or if you missed Friday’s concert, the Arianna String Quartet is hosting a First Mondays event where they will be joined by four UMSL students. In addition to another performance of the octet, audience members will have the opportunity to discuss and interact with the Arianna String Quartet.

The event will be held on March 7 at 7:30 p.m. in the St. Louis Public Radio Community Room at Grand Center. For ticket information, visit www.stlpublicradio.org/arianna/
Tritons Take Over South Carolina With Five Wins

ALEX NEUPERT
SPORTS EDITOR

Both the University of Missouri—St. Louis men and women's tennis teams improved on what they started this fall during a tournament in Hilton Head, South Carolina, from March 2 through 4. The men swept their series of matches against Brevard College, Tiffin University, and Michigan Tech to a 6-0 start to their season while the women beat out Brevard and Michigan Tech en route to a 6-2 record themselves, barely losing a tough match to Tiffin.

The men's team looked very much in form throughout the trip down to Hilton Head, only losing four matches over the course of the three-day competition. In their first bout against Brevard, the opposing Tornados of Brevard automatically defaulted three of their matches for failing to present enough players to compete. UMSL nearly made it a clean sweep, only losing the No. 1 doubles match. Three freshman—Fabian Frank, Cobi Ho, and Max Heath, all undecided—top the Triton lineup combined for 36-6 in games to completely dominate the opposition.

Tiffin proved to be a more challenging adversary the following afternoon, but the Tritons still rose to the occasion to seal the deal with a 6-3 win. Ho was the sole singles loss but forced three sets from Tiffin's Eliot Lenzner Perez. Likewise, Frank had to go to three sets as well after losing the first in his match against his counterpart Luis Ludeña. The remaining singles players for UMSL took their wins in two sets, but Tiffin dominated in doubles competition, winning both the No. 1 and 2 doubles matches while the Tritons won the third.

Continuing their streak, the men's team finished up their trip with another stellar performance. Against Michigan Tech, UMSL once again dropped only the No. 1 doubles match—a possible weak point in their game—to an 8-1 victory over the Huskies. Ho was forced to go to the distance in another three-set match but persevered for the win.

The women's tennis team fared nearly as well themselves, starting the midweek tourney off strong with a 9-0 sweep of Brevard. The Tritons only dropped nine total games on the afternoon, Patricia Maya, sophomore, and Michelle Huber, freshman, both decided; Renee Verbvone, senior, civil engineering; Annie Hayes, sophomore, undecided; Selenova Smith, senior, civil engineering, each swept their opponent while Jennifer Hau, freshman, undecided, won her match 6-1, 6-0.

Again, the Triton women started off the next day against Tiffin on a positive note by winning two of the three doubles matches. However, the opposing Dragons managed to rally back and took the No. 1-3 singles matches as well as the No. 6 matchup to edge by UMSL 5-4. Verbvone and Natalia Carvalhais, senior, business, were the lone singles winners for the Tritons.

UMSL rebounded on March 4, however, with another sweep—this time against Michigan Tech. None of the Tritons were given much trouble, though Carvalhais had to win in three sets after losing her first. Despite the setback, she fought back to preserve the 9-0 victory over the Huskies.

Both the men and women's tennis teams return to Bellarmine on March 12 and hope to continue their strong play as Great Lakes Valley Conference action draws nearer.

Triton Softball Sweeps Florida

SARAH HAYES
A&E EDITOR

It may have been cold and blustery in St. Louis, but in Clearmont, Florida, the University of Missouri—St. Louis Tritons women's softball team were in the sun, keeping the field hot with a strong play as Great Lakes Valley Conference action draws nearer.

March 1 continued a winning trend for the Tritons as they took on both Notre Dame College and Wheeling Jesuit in back to back games. The Tritons proved that they had a powerhouse combo in Carly Kingery, freshman, and Hannah Perryman, senior, criminology, as they shut down both teams from getting even one hit on the scoreboard. Kingery had the Notre Dame Falcons scrambling to recover as she struck out 13 batters in the opening game of the day. Perryman would prove fatal against the batters of Wheeling Jesuit as she struck out 11 batters as the Tritons took advantage of every chance during their game. Perryman also struck out two of the three doubles from Rachel Marling, junior, criminology. Notre Dame found themselves on the losing end as the Tritons recorded their first win of the day, 5-0.

Wheeling Jesuit made a good effort, but ultimately they capped off the night as the defeated team, with the Triton women walking away with a hard won 1-0 victory.

March 2 saw another long day for the Tritons as they went up against both the University of Findlay Oilers and Point Park University Pioneers. These games wrapped up UMSL's latest length of away games in Florida.

The Tritons' match against Findlay was an absolute booon for Hannah Perryman, who, with eight strikeouts in one game, has raised her rank in the NCAA DivII chart rankings for shutout pitchers. Perryman is 3-2 with a 3.00wh strikeout of her career. Perryman is now the sixth player in DivII history to reach that particular milestone. With a pitcher like that, it is no wonder that the Tritons were able to completely shut out Findlay Oilers, ending the game with a clean 9-0.

Point Park would prove to be a trickier opponent, as despite Perryman taking out 16 overall batters, a home run in the seventh inning would put a point on the board for the Pioneers. However, seven hits later, including an runs-batted-in single from Kelly McGovern, senior, special education, the Tritons sent the Pioneers packing to Pennsylvania with yet another win, a most respectable 4-1.

The women of the Tritons' softball team will be leaving Florida with their heads held high, but another game is right around the corner. The Tritons' next game will be a home match on March 8 against the Williams Baptist College Eagles.
Setting the Record Straight

KAT RIDDLER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Last week’s issue carried a story discussing how even a modest decline in student enrollment impacts the financial health of the University of Missouri—St. Louis. The 2015 UMSL Enrollment Summary identified six challenges to student recruitment and retention: (1) the declining population of local prospective students, (2) the increasing cost of attendance and decreasing financial assistance available, (3) subpar campus facilities and amenities, (4) poor retention and graduation rates, (5) negative public perceptions of UMSL as a commuter campus with a mundane life, and (6) the perception that UMSL is located in an unsafe area of St. Louis.

The university must overcome these challenges in order to reach their recruitment goal of 17,500 students by the fall of 2018. Fortunately, these challenges can be overcome with a collective effort to challenge false perceptions.

Declining Population

Between the 2000 and the 2010 U.S. Census, the St. Louis Metropolitan Region grew by 3.3 percent. A 2013 estimate puts the regional population at 2,815,467, up from 2,787,701 in 2010—a roughly one percent growth. Slow, yes, but we have not experienced a decrease in population since the 1980 Census. What has fluctuated is the relative age of the population. We are at a low point in high school-age student graduations, but the good news is that those numbers are set to increase over several years based on the size of younger student populations. We may already have weathered the worst.

Cost of Attendance and Financial Aid

While scarcity of financial assistance certainly does keep some students from attending UMSL, in light of the many students who leave for the Columbia campus, we sometimes seem embarrassed to embrace one of our potential advantages: we are a commuter school. At a time when graduates and support themselves avoid about $40,000 of long-term student debt that would accrue from living on campus those years at Mizzou.

In other words, students can earn a degree from the same university system and start their lives with far less debt to worry about and better credit scores. Now, that is better value.

2015 Crime Comparison of Missouri Universities

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*2014 numbers are used due to lack of published summation report

Campus Facilities and Maintenance

As far as facilities are concerned, we now have more construction and renovation than the university has ever seen. The new recreation center is a marvel and the new science building, optometry building, and business school are taking shape. The makeover of Natural Bridge has spurred up UMSL’s front door and the purchase of the Normanby Golf Course gives UMSL long-term control over a significant land asset. As for maintenance, we must admit that the parking lots and some of the buildings’ furnishings leave much to be desired, but for the most part, our campus is clean, well-lit, landscaped, and inviting.

Student Retention

Much of the issue with student retention is simply an extension of the economic plight of students; over half of departing students cited financial reasons as critical to their decision. While this may be, to a certain extent, unavoidable, UMSL does have control over how well they serve the lifetime academic needs of students. What we call “non-traditional students” might just be the traditional student of this century, where degrees are often earned over eight or ten years. UMSL could do a huge service to such students and draw them back by bolstering the availability of weekend and evening classes.

Commuter School and Social Life

Although attending a commuter school presents a financial upside for many students, UMSL’s many active clubs and organizations do not always get the support they should. Student groups are charged to hold fundraisers in the Millennium Student Center (MSC) and are limited in their access to a number of key marketing tools. We need to do more to extend our social reputation a favor by not closing everything at 5 p.m. as if UMSL were a small town in rural Missouri. The MSC, the Nosh, the Triton Store, and the library should all be open until at least 10 p.m. and offer accommodations like food and drink during those hours of operation. While we spend money to pay employees, but a good way to increase student enrollment is to create more work-study positions. Even considering the costs of keeping facilities open on campus, the goal is not to make a huge profit, but to improve the image of the university and attract more students.

Crime on Campus

The 2015 Crime Report in the Missouri Highway Patrol show that UMSL is a very safe campus. We had two violent crimes in 2015, while Mizzou had ten and Kansas City six. If you want to compare UMSL to a local school, go no further than St. Louis University (SLU). Their incident summary records (which are only updated to 2014) show that SLU had seven aggravated assaults while UMSL had one. And, even though UMSL is a commuter campus, UMSL only had two accounts of vehicle theft while SLU had 26. Despite SLU’s crime rate, students still come to Missouri to attend and no one believes their numbers are being impacted by fear of crime.

Everyone with a vested interest in the UMSL campus—every student, professor, employee, administrator, alumnus, and St. Louis regional leader—needs to start setting the record straight and promoting UMSL as a great place to get a quality education. We especially need to educate those in Jefferson City with the power to increase funding for higher education. Our business school is one of the best in the nation. Our Optometry School is, too. You would think that would resonate with the Missouri General Assembly. The fact that we have nearly over 92,000 alumni—many very successful—should matter to elected public officials.

Sadly, we are not good at bragging; this has to end. Perhaps something simple, like sending every alumni a car window cling, “UMSL PROUD,” would be a good start. It could be better than having a tiger tail hanging out of your trunk.

The Current
March 7, 2016

Opinions

Are you a Veteran?
Would you like to be part of a National Organization for Student Veterans?
Join Us
Every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.
in the Veterans Center
(Clark Hall, room 211)
for our Student Veterans Association Meetings.

UMSL Veterans Center
“There goes a ’little Bern!'” chuckled a man sporting a ‘Not for Sale’ tee, pointing out a patriotically-dressed infant being escorted into line by its mother during the spitefully cold wait to enter the rally for Bernie Sanders at Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville this past weekend. Held in the Vadalabene Center gymnasium on campus, accommodating 5,000 people, the line to enter the free, open-to-the-public event stretched for miles outside the doors. Those who did not arrive earlier than 8 a.m. were unlikely to see the Vermont senator and presidential candidate take the stage at 10:30 a.m.

Senator Sanders covered the spectrum of his policies, beginning with his condemnation of the current campaign finance system, saying, “one person: one vote. Democracy is not about billionaires buying elections.” He fiercely called out Republican opponents for accepting large donations from interest groups and promoting legislation which makes it more difficult for Americans to cast their vote. “If Republicans don’t have the guts to run in free and fair elections, they can get out and get a new job.” He also stressed that his nomination for the US Supreme Court must support overturning the Citizens United ruling of 2010, which allows nonprofits and corporations to spend unlimited sums indirectly in support of or against candidates. This 5-4 ruling led to the rise of ‘SuperPACs,’ the campaign-fanciers Sanders vehemently protests.

Sanders moved on to address the need for childcare in the U.S., better treatment of veterans, and criminal justice reform. While stating that the vast majority of police officers are honest, hardworking, and have a tough job, Sanders said they should be held accountable if they break the law; “police departments should not look like occupying armies.” Sanders stressed the importance of police departments reflecting the diversity of their communities and the unjust but all-too-real one in four chance African American males stand of incarceration. The senator called for an end to minimum sentencing and spoke on substance abuse with the claim “it’s not a criminal justice issue, it’s a healthcare issue.” Healthcare-for-all, one of Sanders’ main points of contention, is summed up in his statement “I believe healthcare is a right of all people.”

The proposed healthcare reform—funded by progressive income tax rates, taxing capital gains and dividends as income, and a 6.2% employer premium—was not the only policy Sanders advocated for aimed at the middle and lower class. Sanders reaffirmed his support of a $15 minimum wage, referring to the federal minimum wage of $7.25 as “a starvation wage.” He used the example of the Walton family, owners of Walmart and collectively worth around $150 billion according to the International Business Times in 2015, who employ people at such low wages, workers are forced on food stamps and Medicaid. The taxpayers, according to Sanders, “the middle class is subsidizing the Walton family.”

Other points touched upon were the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and trade with countries such as China, the U.S. relationship with Native American communities which Sanders called “obscene,” and—importantly for the students in attendance—funding college education. “In the year 2016, when you talk about public education, you cannot just talk about first grade through twelfth grade. The world has changed… We should not be punishing people for getting an education. We should be encouraging it.”

For students at the rally, Sanders’ stances resonated with both personal and political values. Rory Leahy, graduate student, theater, of Southern Illinois University—Carbondale, made the trek to see Bernie with six classmates despite a late night and performance Thursday. Leahy made the trip to be a part of a community of people standing together for what they believe in; “Social and economic justice, wealth inequality, better fortune for young people—he is articulating what so many people in our generation have been saying.” For Leahy, Sanders’ support of education is particularly important in the face of cutbacks at universities, which can drain departments such as theater; “He thinks what we do is important.”

Continued online at thecurrent-online.com