



Date: June 18, 2018

TO: Editor, *Wall Street Journal*

FROM: David Steelman, Chair of The University of Missouri Board of Curators

RE: Recent editorial

The *Wall Street Journal's* recent editorial "More Misery in Missouri" misses the story about what's really happening at Mizzou and perpetuates a narrative designed to erode higher education.

Were there mistakes made at MU? Yes. Are the individuals responsible for those mistakes still leading the university? No. And obviously, the institution has paid a price for the mistakes of those individuals. Now we have a new leadership team in place, and we have affirmed our commitment to free speech. We are investing in the student experience and returning to our roots as a land-grant university, serving the state and nation through breakthrough research and service.

The *WSJ's* editorial made it appear as though many of the cuts were a result of an enrollment decline. In fact, we are making strategic decisions to reallocate money, reducing the size of administration and cutting low-performing programs. Simultaneously, we are reinvesting millions into student financial support and high-demand programs that address areas of national need such as artificial intelligence, nursing, engineering and medicine.

We also have undergone an administrative review covering all four of our universities. The review from an external organization identified several areas where we could combine services and save money, and we are acting on many of those recommendations, not because of an enrollment decline but because we take our jobs as stewards of public resources very seriously.

As a University of Missouri curator, an alumnus and father of two graduates, I have a keen understanding of the work ahead of us, including rebuilding trust across the state and nation. But the *Journal* misses a key point in what's really happening at Mizzou: We're turning the corner. During the past two years, we have received record donations and our incoming class is rebounding—this year's freshman class is expected to be nearly 14 percent larger than last fall's class.

Importantly, we have not shied away from discussions around free speech on campus. When an organization such as the *Journal* prides itself on free speech but criticizes an institution for

championing similar values, it discourages the very progress for which it is fighting. I hope the *Journal* realizes that Mizzou is a bastion of free speech, that we have successfully hosted speakers representing all sides of issues – from Ben Shapiro to Angela Davis—and every speaker has been able to present their views to students in a collegial manner. At Mizzou, we don't shout speakers down. We listen, we debate and we come out of the conversation stronger for having it.

In my interactions with Missourians across the state, it's clear to me that pride in the state's flagship university is roaring back. That the Missouri House and Senate worked together this year to fully restore our funding speaks volumes about their confidence in us.

As Missouri is the "Show-Me State," I invite the *Journal* and its readers not to take my word for it but come here for a visit. We'd love to show you Missouri.