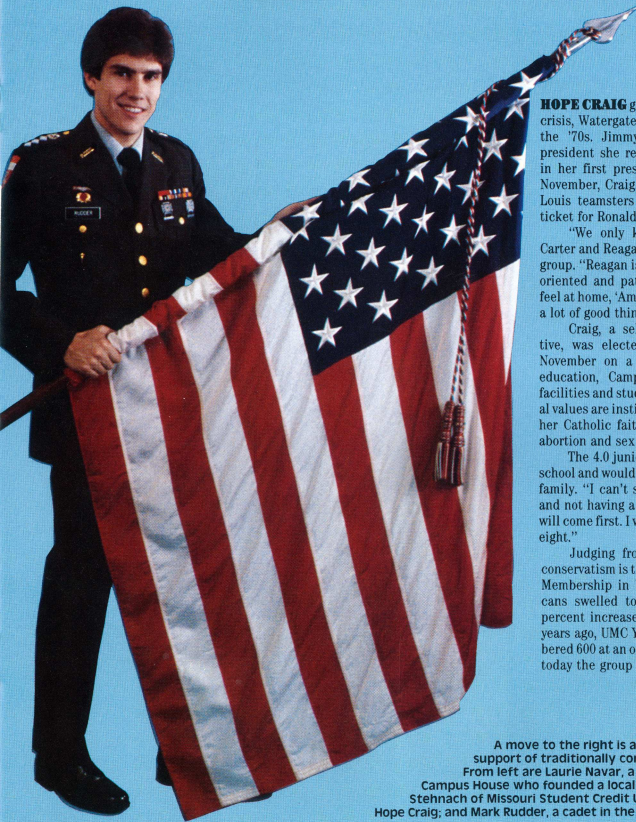




By Carol Again

STUDENTS: THE NEW CONSERVATIVES



HOPE CRAIG grew up with the energy crisis, Watergate and the recessions of the '70s. Jimmy Carter is the first president she remembers well. Voting in her first presidential election last November, Craig, the daughter of a St. Louis teamsters lawyer, punched her ticket for Ronald Reagan.

"We only know two presidents, Carter and Reagan," she says of her age group. "Reagan is so much more family oriented and patriotic. He makes you feel at home, 'Americanish.' Reagan did a lot of good things for the economy."

Craig, a self-described conservative, was elected MSA president in November on a platform to improve education, Campus safety, computer facilities and student services. Her moral values are instilled and reinforced by her Catholic faith; she disapproves of abortion and sex outside of marriage.


The 4.0 junior plans to attend law school and would combine a career with family. "I can't see working this hard and not having a career. But my family will come first. I want lots of kids, six to eight."

Judging from statistics, Campus conservatism is the up-and-coming tide. Membership in UMC College Republicans swelled to 600 this fall, a 100 percent increase from last year. Eight years ago, UMC Young Democrats numbered 600 at an organizational meeting; today the group claims about 65 dues-

A move to the right is apparent in students' support of traditionally conservative attitudes. From left are Laurie Navar, a resident of Christian Campus House who founded a local pro-life agency; Rich Stehnach of Missouri Student Credit Union; MSA President Hope Craig; and Mark Rudder, a cadet in the Army ROTC program.

paying members. Reagan received 68 percent of the votes cast in the precinct serving residence halls and Greek houses.

Enrollment in UMC's Army ROTC program has more than doubled since 1973, with 186 cadets on the roster this fall. "It's OK to be patriotic now," observes Forest Lanning, BS Agr '65, professor of military science. "Ten years ago students had to overcome a tremendous amount of peer pressure to parti-

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cipate." Membership in UMC's Navy ROTC was 177 this fall; Air Force ROTC enrolled 108 students.

Of Mizzou's 384 recognized student organizations, religious groups and fraternities and sororities are most active, says Kurt Keppler, MS '81, PhD '84, assistant director for student development. Fall statistics show 23 religious organizations on Campus.

But some observers caution against applying a conservative label to Campus attitudes. "Students today have seen hard times," says Dr. Bradley Miller, a visiting political science instructor from the University of Kentucky. "I'm not sure their attitudes represent a shift to conservatism as much as a rooting for some kind of stability."

Dr. John Hall, associate professor of sociology, concurs. "Students now are more concerned about their economic future than those of the late '60s, when the future was so uncertain that economic issues were the least pressing. As these concerns have been settled, students have become more preoccupied with themselves."

Political science Professor David Leuthold notes that only a third of

students claim partisanship. "When there is a swing in a particular direction among non-students, typically you see more of a swing among young people, because they are not restricted by party ties."

Patterns indicate that Campus independents wield much strength, he adds. But more students now identify themselves as Republicans than Democrats, Leuthold says, a reversal of the '70s. In a 1984 survey conducted by Associated Students of the University of Missouri, a lobbying organization, 14.8 percent of respondents said they were Democrats; 24.4 claimed to be Republicans.

But not all Campus populations reflect the Republican affiliation. "I would say that black students overall feel politically aligned to the Democratic Party," says Willie Robinson, coordinator of UMC's Black Culture Center. But on non-political issues, minority student opinions probably do not differ from the majority population, he adds. "Many black students are conservative in their views."

Although he may not see it as a shift to conservatism, Visiting Instructor Miller does believe there's a new seriousness on Campus, often manifested in concern about grades.

Craig has earned nothing but A's in her honors interdisciplinary studies at Mizzou. "You have to prove yourself, almost more here than at a private college, with your GPA and activities," she says. She hopes to study law at Harvard, Georgetown or Princeton university. Her sorority, Chi Omega, is No. 1 in grades. "That's the biggest and most important thing to people in the Greek system. I think it reflects the whole Campus."

Quality of education is the student issue today, says student development's Keppler. "The board of directors of ASUM won't talk about social issues now. Their concerns are education oriented." One of the few student demonstrations on Campus last year protested lack of computer access.


In the 1984 ASUM survey, students

supported increasing faculty salaries, increasing state appropriations and increasing state taxes. "I equate this with a desire to improve teaching quality on Campus," Keppler says. "Students today basically want a good job out of their education. They come here to get marketable."

Students who opened a federally chartered and insured credit union in Brady Commons this month hope the undertaking will give them a competitive edge.

"You are in school to learn, and a lot of that goal is to get the best possible job for yourself when you get out," says Mark Kiehl, BS BA '83, chairman of the board of the Missouri Student Credit Union, the seventh of its kind in the nation.

Within a year, credit union directors hope to have \$1 million in deposits. Their operation will serve students and alumni from UMC, Stephens College and Columbia College. As a limited-income cooperative, the credit union

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also can accept deposits from corporations.

Kiehl, a graduate student in computer science from St. Louis, is banking on the experience to give a leg up in the job market. "This credit union carries a tremendous amount of weight. I bring it into every job interview."

Another board member, vice chairman Rich Stehnach, BS IE '84, hopes to succeed Kiehl in the top slot. "When I start interviewing, I would like to say I was chairman of the board for a million-dollar corporation when I was 24," says the master's candidate in industrial engineering from Chesterfield, Mo. "I

don't think many people can say that."

Credit union secretary Steve Gillilan, a junior from Jefferson City majoring in finance, joined the venture to gain experience. He names his dream job without hesitation: chairman of the board of Merrill Lynch. Unlike Kiehl and Stehnach, Gillilan is a Democrat. "As a liberal, I feel very strongly about grass roots. It has been said that the poor can't help the poor. If I am successful, I will be in a better position to help."

A message published in *The Wall Street Journal* by United Technologies Corp. appears as the first page of the credit union's business plan. "Whatever you've been putting off, do it now," the ad exhorts. "Tomorrow may be too late."

The message applies to David Pearce, BS Ag '84, and Scott Watson, a law student from Gallatin, Mo. The pair founded Watson-Pearce Leadership Professionals in 1983, when both were undergraduates. "It was one of those things that if we didn't take advantage of the situation, someone else was going to," says Pearce, whose hometown is Warrensburg, Mo.

Their first seminar, Total Leadership Conference, attracted 120 high-school students from Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri. Participants each paid \$160 for four days of instruction in public speaking, interviewing skills and group dynamics. The fee included room and board.


David Ayres, MSA vice president and former president of UMC College Republicans, agrees that students are more career oriented and economically minded than in the past. "I don't see anything wrong with that, for males or females," adds the junior political science and economics major from Fayette, Mo. But he disagrees with those who doubt a conservative trend. "I personally see a Republican realignment in this country."

Students today are more receptive to conservative views than their counterparts of 10 to 15 years ago, Miller acknowledges.

One conservative forum is provided by Students for America. The organiza-

tion supports "free enterprise, limited government, strong defense and a return to Judeo-Christian values," say co-chairmen Bill Mason, a junior business major from West Frankfort, Ill., and Frank Rodgers, a junior in electrical engineering from Salisbury, Mo. Now in its second year on Campus, the group has 23 dues-paying members; 20 more have shown interest in joining.

A return to traditional values is espoused by Birthright, a non-profit

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organization that performs free pregnancy tests and counsels on alternatives to abortion. Laurie Navar, a former student intern for the National Right to Life Committee, founded the Columbia chapter in 1983.

Birthright allows women to discuss their sexuality and the decisions they have made, says Navar, a senior from El Paso, Texas, majoring in journalism and history. For unmarried people, "real sexual freedom is more easily found in a chaste lifestyle than in a sexually active lifestyle. In a chaste lifestyle, you are free from venereal disease, free from fear of pregnancy, free from complications of contraceptives, free from abortion and free from having to worry about the motivations of your partner."

Navar is one of 34 students living at Christian Campus House. Residents may not smoke, drink alcoholic beverages or visit the rooms of the opposite sex. "We all want to live lives in service to Christ," Navar says.

"Campuses nationwide are much more alive to Christ as a whole than they were five years ago," says David Cover, director of the local Campus Crusade for Christ. The group's weekly meetings

attract 100 students, a 150 percent increase from 1979.

Students are returning to the fold in other ways as well. In his research on student opinions, Keppler notes that the prevailing attitude is to create change by working with those in authority, rather than against them.

In his first meeting as student representative to the Board of Curators, Jay Felton endorsed a resolution to curtail future University investment in companies that conduct business in South Africa. Some students pushed for total divestiture, but Felton, a junior political science major from Maryville, Mo., responded that such action would violate state law. Ayres understands Felton's decision: "He did what he thought was best for students. He has to work with the curators."

Student cooperation is evident in other circumstances, too. Phi Kappa Delta fraternity has launched an alcohol-awareness program that urges compliance with applicable laws. University fee increases now represent compromises between students and administrators.

What students will not compromise is their shot at the top. "We can take on the world," says Stehnach, who wants to be a millionaire and admits to feeling guilty when idle.

Stehnach's goal is not unusual, Miller says. "They think they will be at the top. When they think that way, it makes perfect sense that they would agree with someone who says, 'You are the most important segment of the society, the wealthy segment, and when you make it, everyone makes it.'

"The problem is that most of these students won't be millionaires. When they realize that they won't be the next Henry Ford, maybe if there is a rise in conservatism, it will start to fall away."

An out-of-control deficit also could reverse the shift, Miller predicts. Also, "If we have a big boom time, there may be a new liberalism six to eight years down the road. If jobs are more plentiful, students may have time to take care of societal problems." □