

research into the community has been key to the nation's development. Ever the populist, he goes so far as to propose that even students with mediocre scores in high school be admitted to land-grant universities if they maintain a C average for three probationary semesters: "Like Abraham Lincoln said, 'God must've loved the average person; he sure made a lot of them.'"

## Medicinal messages

When trying to communicate important health messages — the importance of mammograms in detecting breast cancer, for example — how much information is too much? How long before the response slips from a healthy fear that causes action into an overwhelming fear that causes withdrawal?

Those are some of the many questions

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researchers at MU's Health Communication Research Center (HCRC) are working to answer. Founded in 2003, the center's main objective is to improve the way people get potentially lifesaving information. "Behind all this is, 'How do we get better?'" says Glen T. Cameron, advertising professor and center co-director. If communicators get better, the public's health gets better, too.

The center pulls together core journalism and nursing researchers with those from medicine, health professions, biochemistry, health policy, agriculture and other units to examine health communications with a varied toolbox of techniques. Cameron and collaborators, for example, study how best to write press releases that promote cancer prevention and treatment to African Americans, a group with lower detection rates and higher mortality rates than other demographic groups. The researchers are

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**Author John Campbell considers the land-grant system the pinnacle of U.S. higher education policy. A spire of Memorial Union is shown above.**

examining whether tailoring those releases with local facts or stories might increase their odds of landing in a newspaper.

Another project includes biophysiological measurements — looking at facial expressions, heart rate and so on — to determine how people react to messages about health. With the resulting information, communicators could learn how to get those messages out most effectively. HCRC research covers a range of health issues, too, from cancer to arthritis to teen smoking.

Cameron says HCRC work might help lay the foundation for a future school of public health at MU, something he says would further improve how Missourians get their health information. For more information about the HCRC, visit [hcrc.missouri.edu](http://hcrc.missouri.edu).