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Welcome to Wednesday, April 17. Today, Aaron Hanlon argues that higher ed is marching toward the edge of a cliff, a university leader finds himself in a rare bind, and a medical student documents the physical toll of college Quidditch.

Today’s Briefing was written by Fernanda Zamudio-Suaréz, with contributions from Julia Piper, Lindsay Ellis, Len Gutkin, Zipporah Osei, and Don Troop. Write us: fernanda@chronicle.com.

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A broadside against adjunctification.

Most university teaching work is short-term, low-paying, and unstable. In failing to stem the tide of adjunctification, the senior professoriate is contributing to its own imminent obsolescence, argues Aaron Hanlon for The Chronicle Review. Simply put, many adjunct instructors can count on having jobs for only a year at a time, leaving the prospects for their fields uncertain as well. And if shrinking Ph.D. programs is part of the solution to the problem, then universities are also admitting that those fields have no future.

“Without committing to a professoriate with a future, tenured faculty members and administrators are guaranteeing the obsolescence of their own institutions and the eventual erasure of their own careers and legacies,” Hanlon writes. It’s time to act, he argues, and here is one thing professors can do: “In addition to striking, faculty members should audit course offerings and enrollments, and recalculate average course sizes and student-to-faculty ratios based on full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty members.” Read more strategies here.
Quick hits.

- Gov. Charlie Baker of Massachusetts, a Republican, wants to fast-track a proposal to impose more regulations on private colleges that the state suspects might close. A Boston-based think tank believes the proposal will do more harm than good.

- Students who have others complete their coursework for them will be suspended and fail the course under a new policy at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

- Brown University will allow tenure-track and tenured professors in the humanities and some social-science departments to teach three courses per year instead of four to give instructors more time for research and advising.

- Gov. Ralph Northam of Virginia, a Democrat, has decided against giving the commencement speech at Virginia Military Institute, his alma mater, just a few months after racist photos from his 1984 yearbook were posted online.

- The owner of a bar popular with students from Mississippi State University, facing criticism for abruptly closing on Saturday as a tornado bore down, said that the patrons of the packed establishment wouldn't have been able to fit in the basement.

- Stanford University has concluded that Stephen Quake, a bioengineering professor, “observed proper scientific protocol” and did not directly assist the Chinese scientist He Jiankui in creating the world’s first gene-edited babies.

- A former graduate assistant at the College of Saint Rose faces up to 15 years in prison after admitting to intentionally destroying 66 computers on the campus using a “USB Killer” device.

- A transgender freshman at the University of Texas was stripped of his ROTC scholarship because of President Trump’s new rule banning transgender people in the military.

- A 20-year-old student at Briar Cliff University fell to her death from Hawksbill Crag, a rocky point that juts high above Arkansas’s upper Buffalo River wilderness, while on a class-related trip.

- Paul Ryan, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, will join the University of Notre Dame faculty for the next academic year as a guest lecturer in political science and economics.
The president of the University of the Arts, in Philadelphia, defended the free-speech rights of Camille Paglia after petitioners sought her removal from the faculty for comments she made about sexual-assault survivors and transgender people.

### A president is caught between two gigs.

Mark Kennedy, a former Republican congressman from Minnesota, started his job as president of the University of North Dakota in July 2016. Some students and faculty members there said they had a hunch Kennedy wouldn’t have a long tenure in Grand Forks. Less than three years later, those suspicions have proved correct. Well, maybe.

Kennedy was named the sole finalist last week to lead the four-campus University of Colorado system. But some students there have begun protesting his candidacy following controversy over his past support of legislation to restrict abortions and outlaw same-sex marriage. Kennedy has said he would not vote the same way today as he did when he served in Congress.

Kennedy is in an uncommon bind. The chancellor of the North Dakota University system said that the candidacy announcement is Kennedy’s de facto resignation. If the Colorado gig falls through, Kennedy — who was passed over last year for the top job at the University of Central Florida — could find it impossible to return to North Dakota. Our Eric Kelderman breaks down the struggle.

### Campus speech is not a “snowflake issue.”

Colleges are still grappling with questions about free speech on campus amid a flurry of state legislation focused on the topic, not to mention President Trump’s executive order from last month. But don’t call student concerns a “snowflake issue,” Cornell University President Martha E. Pollack said to reporters at the National Press Club on Tuesday. “Students, to my mind, quite legitimately recognize that certain groups take the brunt of uglier speech and want to correct that.” Pollack, who has been at Cornell for about two years, said she in turn argues to students that history has shown that halting speech disproportionately silences marginalized groups. They don’t always buy it, she said.

It’s a different story when student safety is on the line. If university police departments warn of outside agitators and say their agencies cannot protect students, Pollack said, “I have to step in there.” She cited the University of
California at Berkeley’s spending on security for Milo Yiannopoulos, whose scheduled speaking engagement there in February 2017 was disrupted by a violent protest. (The university paid about $4 million in security costs for subsequent visits by Yiannopoulos and the conservative commentator Ben Shapiro.) “Think how many student scholarships could have been covered by the money that Berkeley paid for Milo not to show up,” Pollack said.

Quote of the day.

“I would talk about how if we don’t start giving each other the benefit of the doubt, and really listening to each other, we are truly doomed to repeat the mistakes of history. But funny.”

– Roxane Gay, author and visiting associate professor of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies at Yale University, on what she would tell graduating Cornell University seniors if she was selected as their convocation speaker. Gay volunteered for the post on Twitter after the scheduled speaker canceled.

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Comings and goings.

- Julie H. Sandell, senior associate provost at Boston University, will become senior vice president for academic affairs and provost at Suffolk University on August 1.

- Finis E. St. John, interim chancellor of the University of Alabama system since July 2018, has been named to the post permanently.

- Alastair Cribb, former dean of the faculty of veterinary medicine at the University of Calgary, in Canada, will become dean of the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University on July 15.
Experts are learning that the magic of Quidditch fades after a concussion or two.

Amelia Gurley, a Brown University medical student, launched an international survey on injuries to better understand the safety ramifications of Quidditch, the earth-bound version of the high-flying sport that Harry Potter played in the fictional eponymous series. The game has become popular on many college campuses. “We’re a new sport,” Gurley told NPR. “No one’s really even looking into this.”

The real-life version of Quidditch isn’t for the faint of heart, combining elements of dodgeball, rugby, and basketball — all while the players straddle broomsticks. But unlike in the Harry Potter series, most college campuses don’t have a steady supply of potions to repair cracked skulls and other broken bones. “We’re not wizards,” Gurley said. “We can’t fix that kind of stuff with a wave of our wands.”

So what powers do med-school Muggles have? The ability to conduct a survey to understand patterns of injuries. That’s magic that actually can be found in the halls of the academy.