

OUR VIEW

President's plans for reorganization fall short

The current organization of the University's academic divisions is under scrutiny as President Barbara Dixon has proposed three new organizational models [see story, Page 1]. Although some faculty and staff are supportive of the restructuring, we believe these proposals are inadequate.

Dixon's Model I proposes that the vast majority of the University's academic disciplines be combined under one department, called the College of Arts and Sciences. Separate from this entity would be two schools – a School of Business, and the School of Education and Allied Health, the latter encompassing the University's education program and the current Human Potential and Performance division.

The problems with this plan are obvious. First, Dixon's desire to create an entity encompassing nearly all of the University's areas of study is far too broad. Not only will picking a dean be difficult – after all, faculty from more than 20 areas of study will want a leader attentive to their unique needs – but varied majors such as political science, theater and biology will be located under one vast umbrella. The social sciences undoubtedly have different regulatory needs than do fine arts.

While Model I proposes too much consolidation, Model II eliminates divisional leadership altogether. Dixon proposes that each academic discipline – more than 25 – have its own leader, who would report directly to the vice president. Although Dixon claims that Model II reinforces the “one college, one mission” mantra, this

decentralization is a recipe for disorder. Although Dixon proposes creating a new position within the vice president's office, it is unclear that the vice president's office is capable of such a workload.

Model III is a plan proposing the University's eight academic divisions be reduced to five. Unfortunately, the education discipline is combined with the current Division of Human Potential and Performance, and communication is lumped together with the fine arts. Model III thus creates unnecessary conglomeration that would improperly consolidate certain disciplines.

The advantages of the current system outlined by Dixon – a sense of unity among the University's academic divisions, a lack of turf wars among divisions, and attractiveness to new faculty – are aspects that might be in danger of evaporating under any of the proposed reorganizations.

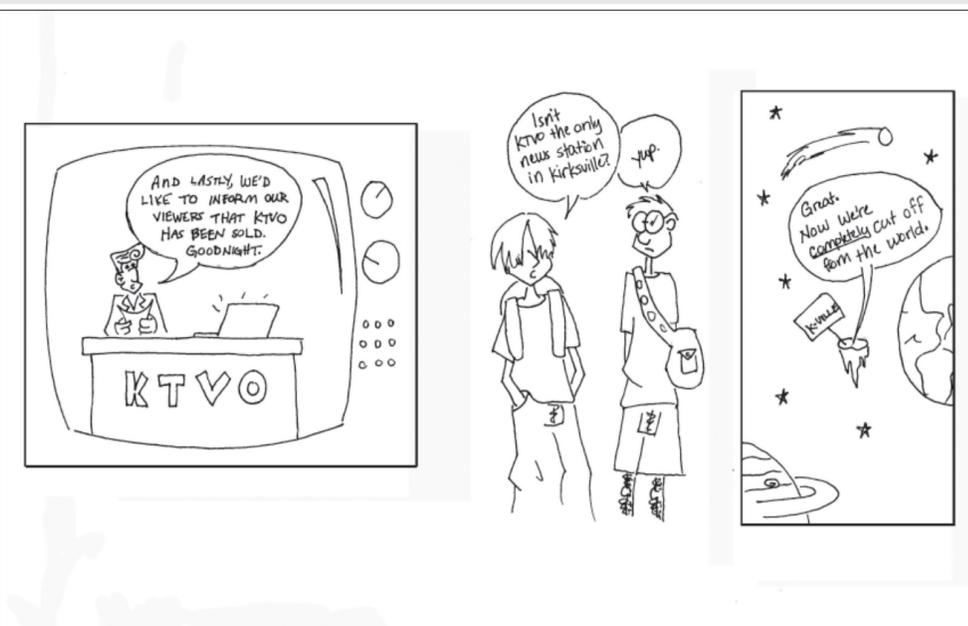
Dixon outlined a series of disadvantages inherent to the current academic structure, such as a leadership that is distant from students, uneven standards across divisions, little chance for faculty to grow in leadership positions and inadequate secretarial support. First, after examining each of her proposals, it is unclear how any of the plans would address these frustrations and more in one fell swoop. Second, it is unclear why a massive overhaul of the University's academic structure is needed to address any of these issues.

Dixon is a capable administrator and a superb representative for the University. We disagree with her overambitious reorganization, however.

The advantages of the current system ... might be in danger of evaporating under any of the proposed reorganizations.

Truville

Perrin Carrell/cartoonist



Letters to the Editor

Extremists mentioned in column are unrepresentative of the public

Thanks to Mr. Matthews for his enthusiasm for Rosa Parks and the civil rights movement [Nov. 3 issue of the Index]. I would only implore Mr. Matthews to expand his call to action from the political left to include the entirety of the political spectrum and those outside of it. Though he disagrees – vociferously – with conservatives in general, it is unfortunate that he counts us out of the solution altogether. Many of us despise bigotry and racism and would like to proceed toward an equitable society.

I must especially disagree with Mr. Matthews' assertion that “a large portion of the population sees nothing wrong with harassing or killing someone because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or political beliefs.” The presence of 762 hate groups among 350 million citizens creates a poor ratio, weaker than one group for every 400,000 citizens. Do not succumb to these groups' delusions as representing mainstream thought. The ones who yell epithets at their opponents (such as at Southern Poverty Law Center founder Morris Dees during a speech at UMSL last month) and burn crosses can only resort to noise and violence in order to be heard because their ideas do not stand up to the scrutiny of research, tolerance and understanding.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Matthews used Kirksville as an example because one backwards-minded paper published by one closed mind should not taint the image of a community blessed by thousands of enlightened minds. Living examples of tolerance and fellowship inspire the heart toward understanding in a way that no court precedent or constitutional amendment can.

Go to Native American Heritage Month events, and send letters to that other paper telling its readers what they missed.

Jeremy Loscheider
Alumnus

Senate-bashers ignore the real purposes of elected government

I always enjoy when a real complaint about the Truman student government degenerates into an exercise in Senate-bashing.

I must apologize to the writers of the letter in the Nov. 3 edition – “Example of SAM proves Senate shouldn't travel down that road again” – if Student Senate has not done enough showy-happy-fun stuff for the student population in their tenure. However, this is not Senate's job.

Senate is not your high school Stu-Co. They do not put together prom and have bake sales for the senior field trip. Senate works within the Truman administration. When's the last time you heard anyone complaining about the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs not doing anything visible on the Truman campus?

SAB and FAC exist to do the showy-happy-fun stuff, thus freeing Senate up to work on issues of functional importance to the college community such as, say, reviewing the Student Conduct Code or establishing an environmental studies minor or reforming scholarship policy or introducing the Collegiate Readership Program or facilitating University accreditation or expanding the wireless network or advocating the approval of “sexual orientation” in the Truman nondiscrimination policy or fighting for the rights of student renters in Kirksville or expanding the campus recycling program

or compiling a Student Bill of Rights or moving the bike racks back. This is just the short list that comes to mind at the moment of all the things I've seen Senate do in the past five semesters.

So I apologize again, good letter writers, if your only perception of Senate is students handing out candy on the Quad (which is an exercise of the Bulldog Party, not Student Government). The fact of the matter is that when Senate does something important, it does it regardless of the attention it gets (or doesn't get) from you.

Matthew Seibert
Junior

Intelligent design report failed to define terms key to the debate

Last week's special report concerning the controversies that the intelligent design theory has provoked within American scientific communities was nearsighted. Several key terms, among them “religion,” “science” and “metaphysics,” were carelessly tossed about. In many cases, staff writers as well as the individuals whom they quoted simply assumed that such words garner universal consent. After all, why define what everybody already concedes?

Yet basic disagreements on what counts as science and religion stand at the heart of this controversy. Those who have studied the subjects of science and religion, among them local pastors and university scientists, ought to acknowledge that. To win universal consensus for a definition of either science or religion is an impossible task, unless one simply assumes a definition and briskly avoids the task altogether. From my point of view, the intelligent design controversy points out an ironic faith exhibited by much of the scientific community. Scientists adopt a particular perspective from which they examine aspects of the world. But what justifies adopting this initial framework, through which everything of interest will hence be examined, explained and understood?

In this case, evolution is a framework theorized by human beings. So far as I have learned, it is a compelling framework. Nevertheless, it has some holes, some need for modifications over time and, as philosophers argue, the potential to be rejected in favor of a new framework. But what do I know about evolution save for that which experts have told me? Very little. This is a problem that the practice of science shares with the practice of religion. When institutionalized, both tend to form authoritative priesthoods that commonly discourage questioning the foundations of their authority. Frameworks are assumed to be true and propagated from generation to generation.

But some human beings will always return to the foundations, even if in the eyes of many their efforts are misguided. If some support intelligent design, hoping to prove the existence of the Divine Being that happens to be the exclusive property of their religious sect, then it is too bad that their horizons are not broader. Even so, such people are raising provocative questions in the spirit of science. Most of us don't like to talk about the foundations of our lives, fields of study, etc. Perhaps were we to do so more often, more would wonder why most medieval Catholics were just as likely to accept Ptolemy's view of the universe as most university-level physics students will accept the Big Bang and other respected views of their time.

Where others perceive intelligent design's threat to scientific progress, I see the potential for change. In the distance, I see an opportunity to cash in the unrealized promise of critical thinking, a world in which science, religion, politics, economics, etc. would be subject to the scrutiny and molded by the reasoned opinions of the world's self-aware multitudes. That is also the hope of democracy. But in today's academic science, national politics and global economics, I perceive the lingering dominance of paternalism.

Shaine Griggs
Senior

Insert refused to recognize the benefits of pro-choice ideals

As I eagerly snatched up the Nov. 3 issue of the Index, a slick, multipaged insert fluttered to the floor. Not being a fan of littering, I bent to pick it up but gave it no further attention until I returned to my room. Once settled at my desk, I opened up the rather large advertisement and quickly realized it advocated pro-life ideals. I will admit that I rolled my eyes a bit, but I also will admit that although I am very strong in my pro-choice convictions, I am not opposed to lending an ear (or an eye) to the equally strong convictions of the other side.

I mostly found things I expected: testimonials, some pro-choice bashing and graphic descriptions of abortion methods. But unexpectedly I also found an article tying “Planned Parenthood,” “birth control,” “Margaret Sanger” and “eugenics” together. Birth control is not a eugenic method of race or class control, as the article argues. It allows individual women the right to choose when they want to begin a family and when they want to delay it.

Planned Parenthood stated on its Web site that “attempts to discredit the family planning movement because its early 20th-century founder [Margaret Sanger] was not a perfect model of early 21st-century values is like disavowing the Declaration of Independence because its author, Thomas Jefferson, bought and sold slaves.”

The same article in the supplement stated that abortion providers discriminate against African-Americans by specifically targeting them. I don't believe the discrimination lies with the abortion clinic staff – it lies with the “over one million couples waiting, hoping and praying for a chance to adopt a child” as the advertising supplement calls them. What kind of babies are most of these couples waiting for? I can tell you the answer is not black – it's white.

For me, being pro-choice doesn't mean I smile when I hear about abortions. I think they should be rare because I believe that education about contraceptives is the best way to avoid a painful decision altogether. I also believe, however, that if a woman is in a position where she doesn't believe she should have her child (whether it is because of a rape or because Target refused to give her emergency contraceptives) then she should have the choice between an abortion, adoption and parenthood.

By refusing to recognize the benefits of contraceptives and the obvious discrimination within the adoption system, this advertisement was nothing more than trash littering the sidewalks of our campus.

Marie Weichold
Sophomore

INDEX Web poll

Does intelligent design have a place in a public school education?

Nov. 8 Results

as of midnight Tuesday

60% (171)

Yes. Alternative theories of life's origins should be offered.

40% (113)

No. It's a theory based on faith.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION:

Does the University's academic structure need reorganization?

vote online at
www.trumanindex.com

INDEX

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Serving the University community since 1909

Editorial policy

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The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Index through a majority vote of the Editorial Board, consisting of the editor in chief, managing editor, news editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

First copies are free. Additional copies are 25 cents.

Index corrections

- The story about Bullets Rugby on Page 22 of the Nov. 3 issue of the Index contained several inaccuracies. The Bullets played in Manhattan, Kan., not Lawrence, Kan. Senior flyhalf Stephanie Dettmer was misidentified as a wing. Oct. 29 was not the first time the Bullets played with a full team.
- Angela Rippe was misidentified on Page 22 of the Nov. 3 issue of the Index as being tackled by a Kansas State University opponent. Her tackler was a member of the Bullets' alumnae rugby team.

Letters policy

The Index welcomes letters to the editor from the University community. Letters to the editor are due by noon the Monday before publication and become property of the Index. Submissions are subject to editing, must contain a well-developed theme and cannot exceed 300 words except at the discretion of the editorial board.

All letters to the editor **MUST** be typed, double-spaced, signed and include a phone number for verification.

Letters to the editor also may be submitted by e-mail at index@truman.edu or on our Web site at www.trumanindex.com. Include the words “letter to the editor” in the subject line of the e-mail. No individual may submit more than one letter a week.