

Ceremonies provide a sense of validation

Two weeks ago, I wrote a column offering my opinion on why assessment is important to Truman, and thus, students should take testing and surveys seriously. I still believe this to be true, but I questioned the deeper reasons why we should be taking it so seriously. On the surface, the reasons seem clear. Truman needs testing because of the need to compare the progress of Truman students against the progress of students across the nation. Then improvements and changes can be made to curriculum and teaching methods. But why do we measure ourselves against others? Why don't we measure our progress against individual goals and benchmarks?

There are too many reasons to cover in this column why humans measure themselves against others. But one important reason is validation. Humans are social creatures, not really meant to live, work and play alone. Validation is only a natural progression of this idea. It is a way of relating to the world around you, the very thing that humans are suited to do.

I am graduating in December. I am ready to leave Kirksville and join the career world. My mom and I are going to Las Vegas in celebration the day after the ceremony. I briefly flirted with the idea of simply skipping the whole commencement thing. After all, I know how hard I have worked during my time here. I know how sometimes I loved it here, and sometimes I couldn't stand it. I know that my parents are proud of me, and I know that this chapter of my life is ending. My brain knows this, so what is the point of going through the ceremony when all it does



Katie Stuart

is confirm something I already know? Validation.

The graduation ceremony provides closure, the sense that I really did accomplish something while I was here. It also will give me that feeling of pride and closure. My family will see the end of my work and should feel a sense of accomplishment themselves. It is hard to be a parent of a college child: the constant moving in and out of the house as school ends and starts, all the moves in and out of the residence halls, all the times I called home crying and all the times I didn't find the time to call because I was too wrapped up in my own life. This is their validation too. It was hard. It was emotionally draining. And much like many other events in our lives, the ceremony means something important is ending and something vital and new is beginning.

This is why we have any ceremonies at all. This is why we go to funerals – to validate life. And why we have weddings. To validate commitment. This is why I will never agree with those who

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say the only difference between living together and being married is a piece of paper. Honestly, who looks at a couple who lives together and ever sees their relationship as serious as someone who has vowed to carry out their commitment for a lifetime?

There is a reason that we stress about our grades and proudly display awards and accomplishment: validation. It is the acknowledgement that someone else knows of all those sleepless nights studying, the sweat and tears about work, the group projects and times we have struggled to understand a tough concept.

Not only does someone recognize this fact, but I also am respected for it. So, as Truman measures our progress, worries over bumps in the road and frets about student opinions, I will understand it for what it is. It is a search for validation and with everything Truman has given me, the University deserves it.

Katie Stuart is a senior business administration major from Maryland Heights, Mo.

MOBIUS system could be a casualty of future budget cuts

I'd like to introduce you to a dear friend of mine. His name is MOBIUS.

Missouri Bibliographic Information User System, or MOBIUS for short (or MOBI for even shorter), you might have already met, most likely in a life-or-death situation involving an obscure research topic and a slim Pickler collection. That's right, now you remember – MOBIUS was the one who came through for you, magically conjuring the necessary research materials from a school far, far away and delivering them right into your busy little hands.

You'll be glad you met MOBIUS – most would agree he's a pretty likable guy. He's so likable, in fact, that Truman State University recently took a bullet meant for our MOBIUS.

The bullet came in the form of Gov. Matt Blunt's 100 percent slash to MOBIUS's \$649,530 budget, obviously a potentially fatal wound. Fortunately for those of us who have formed a special connection with good ole MOBI, Truman has grown pretty attached itself and refused to watch MOBIUS die.

When funding was cut, no one even considered elimination of the program as a viable option. The same was true at other schools all across the state. Instead, our library made a few quiet shifts to ensure MOBIUS's continued comfort and, in turn, the comfort of the students MOBIUS serves. A few library higher-ups will catch a shard of inconvenience, but the rest of us will remain unscathed.



Katie Gilbert

For now.

Our sense of security in the continued quality of our education is not necessarily false, but it is beginning to look as though it might exist under the ticking of a time bomb. How much more can Truman silently scramble so students don't feel the ramifications of significant financial losses? Especially considering the projected cuts to higher education, the depth of Truman's budgetary bag o' tricks is sure to be tested.

Now, when the shift that turned into a pinch turns into a surgical removal, what will be removed? MOBIUS, like other convenient amenities on campus, appears to be an easy target. One thing is for sure: In the midst of all this cutting, shifting and restructuring, we're bound to learn a lot about Truman's true character and priorities. Will we like what we see?

Whatever the answer proves to be, we're obligated (and hopefully will

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feel the need) to let all higher forces involved know what we think at every step. Granted, no one's actively trying to swindle us out of a quality education simply for the sake of swindling, and deep enough budget cuts inevitably mean comparable material and service losses.

But to guarantee these changes are in our best interest, we should assume the role of watchdogs over the giant pair of scissors making new designs in our schooling. The blades should feel the pressure to perform well that comes from being watched.

If you remain blissfully ignorant of where the budget-blasting gun is pointed, you might catch a bullet and not even realize it. Regardless of whether or not you feel the wound, however, you'll be suffering all the same.

Katie Gilbert is a senior psychology major from Lenexa, Kan.

Faith shouldn't be only subject of interactions with non-believers

It's the time of year.

The time of the year again a Christian comes knocking into my life to let me know I am meant to be a Christian.

Weirdly, funnily, the number of times someone asks me out to church is almost ungodly this time of year. It double-digits after Thanksgiving.

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Nevermind I have known this person for a week and a half.

Nevermind that Campus Christian Fellowship and I share a weird relationship that has its foundations on each of us believing the other is an evil.

Nevermind that I hardly know if I believe in the religion I was born into, let alone a religion that is entirely foreign.

Nevermind that this overzealous human being knows I maybe will make fun of her earnestness and perhaps even write about it. Nevermind at all.

Seriously, what is the deal? You ask some Christians a question about their faith, and off they go, talking about how Jesus is the love of their lives and how serving the Lord gives them more happiness than anything they do with live, flesh-and-blood, breathing human beings.

They then offer you a much-needed ride to Wal-Mart and smugly add you should go to church with them.

And then you tell them you are having a bad day, and they say they are going to say a prayer for you.

OK, I am not suggesting you should



Prajwal Sharma

give up Christianity to gain acceptance from people like me. It's your belief and your religion – and if that gives you happiness, then so be it.

But could you please stop talking about your escapades with Christianity with everyone around you?

I hate it, and a good number of people I know hate it.

We understand you want us to experience your happiness and contentment.

We understand that loving Jesus makes you less stressed-out than we are – at the end of the day, you have Jesus. We only have homework, tests and work. We understand you are trying to help us. We also understand you have the time to talk about your passion for Jesus for three hours. We do. We do not think you are not a bad person.

So do us a favor. Do the good things you do. Continue giving away hot chocolate and Kool-Aid outside Baldwin Hall. You have no idea how

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much joy the drinks give to people like me.

The entertainment at Damascus Road is great, and the speeches are fabulous, too. Talking about Christianity is great at Damascus Road because you know people are there to actually listen to it.

But making it your topic of conversation every time you meet a non-Christian is not cool. Today it almost made me cry with frustration.

And those professors – you know who you are – giving extra credit to students for going to church when you are not even teaching a philosophy and religion class – makes you an idiot. A moron of the most sinful kind.

For once, keep your freedom of speech claptrap to yourself.

Prajwal Sharma is a senior communication major from Gangtok, Sikkim.

Around the Quad

This week's question: “Do you think the state of Missouri gives the University enough financial support? Why or why not?”



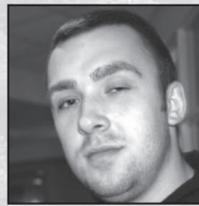
Erin Roper junior

“I think the money's there. It could always be better, but we have money.”



Lauren Palazzolo sophomore

“The state gives the University enough financial support because of the great amount of scholarships that the University offers.”



Dustin Love sophomore

“Truman's relatively cheap, so the state's going to have to kick in a lot in order for us to actually go here.”



Lauren Walter sophomore

“I don't think that I'm well enough informed about the financial support that we're getting from the state, but I wouldn't like for tuition to raise anymore. Whatever they could do to help would be good.”

Push for equality needs to continue

A few points need to be made clear.

In response to a letter to the editor last week criticizing my Nov. 3 column that suggested the civil rights movement needs to be revitalized, I need to say the political movement for social equality is certainly not exclusively a concern of liberals. A couple of my friends in College Republicans said they were offended by my statements, which were not meant to suggest that conservatives are not concerned with social justice and promoting diversity. That, of course, is ridiculous.

Also, the letter said the proportion of hate groups to the number of Americans is a relatively low 400,000 to 1. Actually, when I first wrote “a large portion of the population sees nothing wrong with harassing or killing someone because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or political beliefs,” I thought the ratio would be much larger. When discussing social injustice, one group for every 400,000 people definitely is a large portion of the population, and Kirksville certainly is a valid example of a community where hate is active.

Hate is too prevalent in America and in our community, and despite political beliefs, everyone must fight to stop it. That should be made clear.

Obviously our goal should be to prevent the pain and anger caused by social inequality by promoting a society in which no members suffer discrimination. In the United States, a major blow to this effort has been delivered by the Bush administration in the form of crippling the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, which is dedicated to enforcing U.S. antidiscrimination laws. The number of gender and racial discrimination prosecutions has declined 40 percent since 2000, disgruntling many of the department's employees, according to a Nov. 13 Washington Post article citing department statistics.

Also, since a buyout program was forced on the division to eliminate those lawyers and officials who do not agree with the administration's radically conservative agenda, the number of lawyers working for the division has declined 20 percent this year. Under the Bush administration, the executive department charged with promoting diversity and antidiscrimination has been hindered drastically. The Bush administration apparently does not see the goal of a just society as a priority



Chris Matthews

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and clearly is not doing enough to stop hate in our country. That should be made clear.

In the Kirksville community, some attempts are being made to promote diversity but are coming up short. Daniel Mandell, professor of history and leader of the antidiscrimination group Connect for Respect, said the group has been involved in providing information to the community but is not as coordinated as he would like. The recent presentations by Karen Aroesty, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, and Harry Laughlin have been sponsored by the group. Mandell said one of the group's goals is to unite organizations on campus and in the community, enabling them to work together to promote diversity and hate awareness. However, this network of groups has not been established. Connect for Respect needs to make more of an effort in coordinating its efforts, and that should be made clear.

However, the ultimate responsibility does not rest with Connect for Respect, the Justice Department or any other government agency. It rests with you and every other individual in society. It is not enough to attend diversity events or discard a simple-minded hate-promoting newspaper, although it helps. You must actively attempt to promote diversity and social equality, and the world needs you now. It takes the efforts of every individual in society to stop hate and promote diversity, and that needs to be made perfectly clear.

Chris Matthews is a junior communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.