

OUR VIEW

Graduation cancellation presents quandry for some

Close your eyes. You're about to graduate.

You're adorned in cap and gown, sitting with some of your closest friends from the last four years of your life. You're about to begin a new phase in your life, and it all begins with walking across the stage, shaking hands with the dean and receiving your diploma.

At least, that's how it's supposed to happen.

Open your eyes. You're graduating August 2007, and you will be doing none of that.

Truman President Barbara Dixon sent an e-mail to Truman students Tuesday, in which she announced that the August commencement ceremony has been cancelled (see story, Page 2). Students who are able and willing to graduate in August still will be able to receive their degrees, but they won't walk across the stage in August.

"In recent years, the need for the August ceremony has declined and student participation has decreased sharply," Dixon wrote in her e-mail. "This past August only 106 undergraduate and graduate students combined marched at commencement — barely 50 percent of those eligible."

Dixon also noted that "implementing this change ... will provide us with additional resources that can be used to benefit more students than the very small number who are choosing to attend the August ceremony."

From the outer surface, Dixon's rationale seems to make sense. Fewer people are choosing to walk, so eliminating August graduation won't affect too many students and is another chance for Truman to pinch pennies.

But the University seems to be overlooking one small detail. Truman charges students without scholarships between \$5,970 and \$17,420 per year. For paying that much in the course of four or five years, plus all of the all-nighters we pull, papers we write and tests we take, the very least Truman could do is allow us to walk across the stage in front of our family and friends when we actually graduate.

Yes, to be fair, Dixon wrote "Students who would have participated in the August ceremony will be given the ... opportunity to participate in either the May or December ceremonies."

But what happens if one is not able to attend the May or December graduation? May graduation might not work for some students because they could be studying abroad in the spring. Also, going through the graduation ceremony without actually graduating is kind of like winning the Nobel Prize without receiving the actual award itself. It means that much less.

The December graduation ceremony has some potential problems as well. If students are allowed to pursue a career once they receive their diplomas in August, some students won't be able to return to Kirksville because of work or travel conflicts. Not everyone who graduates stays in the Midwest.

We ask President Dixon and the rest of the administration to remember their graduation ceremony. Remember the feeling of pride and accomplishment as you walked across the stage, shook hands with the dean and received your diploma.

Don't deny some students their right to feel the same way.



Letters to the Editor

Kirksville Daily Express editor refutes accusations made by Gant

As a 1993 Truman State University graduate, I have always taken pride in my alma mater, and specifically the Index, where my first newspaper column was published.

Unfortunately, that typical source of pride left a bitter taste in my mouth after reading Andrew Gant's unprovoked personal attack disguised as a column in last Thursday's edition. By attacking my credibility without any proof or justification, this column, filled with inaccurate information and assumptions, sullies the Index's reputation and lowers its level of performance.

My column never referred to anyone specific, although I did criticize some of the local media reports for exaggerating recent crimes. Mr. Gant assumed I was attacking the Index, which I wasn't, citing an editorial published a few weeks earlier, which I'm not sure Andrew read.

However, Mr. Gant decides to take it upon himself by attacking me personally, claiming I am "often wrong" while later implying I have compromised my journalistic integrity in dealing with the police department. Both remarks are very serious accusations and also lack any kind of explanation or justification. It is lazy and irresponsible to make statements of that nature and not back them up with some sort of evidence.

Mr. Gant continues to meekly justify his remarks by claiming a few weeks ago I wrote a column "about a woman who let her dog drive her car."

While I did use that story for an anecdotal lead, the column clearly was not about that one event, instead focusing on the double standard of forcing some criminals (such as meth producers) to register where they live in the name of public safety, while ignoring other dangerous offenders, such as drunk drivers.

I am truly hoping Mr. Gant simply didn't read that column in its entirety before criticizing it, rather than believing he has that poor of reading comprehension skills.

But in the most revealing comment of them all, Mr. Gant then criticizes me for commending the police for being up front and honest with the media. Journalists typically appreciate that kind of candor and honesty, but apparently, not Andrew.

In fact, he says, "it's not Orear's job ... to commend the police department. It's his job to help report the things your readers have a right to know."

Well, we did report the crimes. But I would also encourage Mr. Gant to read his own newspaper. In that very same editorial he cited earlier in his column, the Index staff states: "... we commend the Kirksville Police Department for their investigations into this matter. ..."

Uh-oh, Mr. Gant. Maybe we can commend the police department after all. The Index has enjoyed quite a bit of success the last few years in establishing itself as one of the top college newspapers in Missouri. With success comes higher expectations, and columns displaying this kind of laziness and inaccuracy will make it impossible to meet them.

Greg Orear
Managing Editor
Kirksville Daily Express

Public smoking ban places restrictions on people's lifestyles

I don't smoke, never have and never will. I believe smoking is a horrible, dirty, expensive and often deadly habit. I also believe most businesses are probably better off banning smoking and should consider doing it, especially in light of the public interest generated by this proposal.

That being said, I could not more strongly oppose a public ban.

Despite what proponents of this ban claim, there is no health issue here. I am not saying that secondhand smoke is harmless as I'm not qualified enough to do so. I have no doubt that some level of exposure causes health problems. I am saying such arguments are completely moot.

This matter is far different from cow poop in our watershed. In those cases, you can't easily avoid the pollution; in this case, you can. Don't eat there; don't work there; don't even step in the door. Problem solved. It could not be simpler.

If some of you insist upon making a change, I have no doubt that some business owners will hear your concerns provided you approach them with respect for theirs. I believe some businesses will actually agree with you since a smoke-free environment probably won't hurt some business.

But if you believe the places you eat and work at pose a serious health risk, I have no sympathy for you when you choose to spend time there. I will not support a ban so you can have it both ways — not at the expense of someone else's choice.

The problem I have with this proposed ban is the ban itself. All of you who support it, whether you realize it or not, are saying to every business and customer in Kirksville, "You'll do it my way or else I'll make you do it my way." You're saying the way everyone else chooses to live doesn't matter because you have enough people to make everyone live the way you tell them to live.

You cannot hide that fact behind your otherwise admirable intention to make Kirksville a healthier place.

Brian Bourne
Alumnus

Students and adults should be more aware of the pains of skin cancer

An important detail was omitted from Mark Nordstrom's cause of death in [the Aug. 31 issue of] the Index. This detail is important because he wanted people to know how not to have this disease happen to them. His "advanced form of cancer" was melanoma — skin cancer. The skin cancer then spread to his lungs and bone marrow.

Because I live in Columbia and Mark taught with my wife at Truman, I visited him several times during his hospitalization. Mark asked me to stay during the visit from the oncologist, and thus I heard from the doctor's mouth the type of cancer. I also was in his room when he talked to his daughter in Ohio on the phone and heard him say emphatically: "This is not fun. Promise me you won't get tan."

Mark's cause of death — skin cancer — is preventable. His students and all students and adults should honor him by avoiding sun exposure and tanning booths.

Paul Speckman
Professor of Statistics
University of Missouri

Reviewer dishes stereotypical description of New Orleans

In the article "New Restaurant Kicks Kirksville ..." [Sept. 14 issue] the writer describes Cajun food as "French food invited to a Mardi Gras party with beads and topless women."

As a former resident of New Orleans (born and lived 12 years), I wasn't necessarily offended, but I think that there are better ways to describe that specific kind of food.

Cajun food is unique to Louisiana and the Acadians. It isn't about Mardi Gras and topless women (who, by the way, are all tourists). It is so much more than that. The runny nose you get and the burning of your lips because of the spices is just the beginning of it.

To people who may have not had the opportunity to try it, one could say it's not for the faint of heart. If someone wants food with a punch that is appealing to all senses, try Cajun. You can't really get by eating Cajun food without being afraid to get your fingers, mouth and clothes dirty.

I just think that when trying to describe something that many people may be unfamiliar with, one shouldn't use topless women and Mardi Gras to compare it. To me, it just sounds extremely tacky. I understand if he was trying to be witty or whatnot, but honestly, it doesn't do such amazing food justice.

I just thought that I should get that off my chest.

Ashley Otting
Sophomore

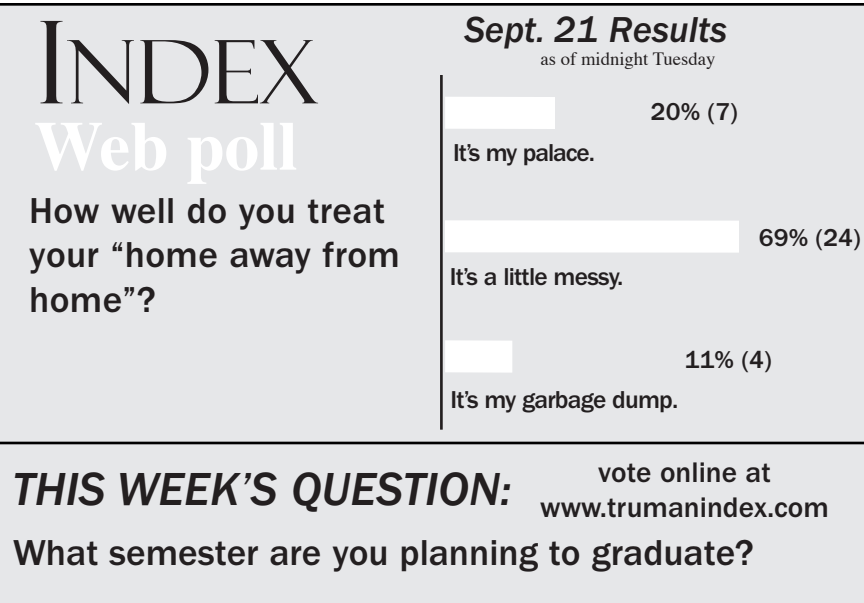
Alumnus compliments editorial section for diverse topics

I would like to start by declaring that reading the Index, and especially the editorial page, is one of the highlights of my week. Good work to all involved in its production.

I was disappointed to see a fellow reader criticize the Index editorial page in last week's Letters to the Editor. I believe the Index staff does an excellent job of fulfilling their mandate to be an informative and entertaining news resource to the Truman campus and to the larger Kirksville community. As a devoted Index reader for the past four-plus years, I can rarely recall when the Index editorial page did not have something of substance to offer for any type of reader.

Take as an example the Sept. 14 issue. The editorial page included items about a national event (War on Terror), a local event (response to local newspaper editor), an issue pertaining to college education (tuition cost) and a cultural event (death of Steve Irwin). For limited space, I think this is a great selection of topics to editorialize. Understandably, Mr. Topping Jr. would like to see more coverage about current campus issues, but these issues are already covered in news items. Once again I praise the Index editorial page and staff in total for an outstanding newspaper. Thank you for your continued hard work.

Jason Hull
Alumnus



INDEX

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Serving the University community since 1909

Editorial policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The production offices are located in the Student Union Building. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. Content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff.

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.

Index corrections

- The infographic on Page 16 in the Sept. 14 issue of the Index incorrectly identifies the number of new faculty members. Ralph Cupelli, assistant to the vice president for academic affairs, said there are 10 new full-time and 4 part-time faculty members.
- In the article "University drops CableOne, expands wireless network" on Page 3 in the Sept. 14 issue of the Index, freshman move-in day is identified as occurring Aug. 18. It actually occurred Aug. 20.
- The people in the photo on Page 8 of the Sept. 14 issue of the Index are misidentified as U.S. and Missouri representatives. Some are representatives, while others are candidates.

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. The Index does not publish anonymous letters to the editor.

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.