

Should FAC have funded Ward Connerly's speech?

Amount was within allotment guidelines



Kelsey Landhuis

A week ago, Ward Connerly came to Truman to speak about a proposed amendment to the Missouri constitution that would end race-based affirmative action. The event was sponsored by the College Republicans (no surprise there), the College Libertarians (so far, so good) and - wait for it - the Funds Allotment Council.

"Why is FAC funding this guy?" some students wondered. "There will be a huge protest! Mass chaos will ensue! FAC can't let a speaker like that come to campus."

Actually, it can. And it should. According to FAC's constitution, the group "will strive to fund a variety of activities sponsored by a variety of organizations that will provide potential benefit to all members of the Student Association and the larger University Community."

This mission statement does not contain the clause, "as long as the opinions expressed during these activities are not too offensive." FAC has funded many speakers in the past, on topics ranging from drug and alcohol abuse to the environment to the Holocaust. The organization makes few value judgments on the content of speakers' messages

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when it is determining whether to fund them — it simply evaluates whether they will draw a crowd and generate interest among the University community. Connerly definitely met these criteria: Affirmative action is a subject of interest for many college students, and Facebook events encouraging students to protest Connerly's presentation confirmed FAC's prediction that the event would generate a lot of student interest.

So FAC did its job and was completely within its rights to fund this speaker.

"Yeah, but what about his \$4,000 fee?" some persist, having read the fine print of the FAC slate. "Isn't that a bit much?"

Not really. Granted, for college students who consider themselves in the money when they can scrape together enough cash to order a pizza, \$4,000 is a big chunk of change. However, for many speakers who come to the University, \$4,000 is reasonable. In the spring of 2007, FAC allotted this sum to the Nursing Students Association for a speaker

on health awareness who most likely generated much less interest within the University. Connerly was not unique in receiving a large speaker's fee, and judging by what I heard about the raucous crowd at the event, he earned every penny.

FAC simply fulfilled its duty by providing money to an organization to fund an event, like it has for many other speakers in the past. The reason people are upset this time is because of the speaker's views, and that in itself is disturbing. Expressing these trite concerns about funding sends the message, "We don't like what this guy has to say, so we don't think he should get to speak."

However, whether or not you agree with Connerly, he should have the right to express his opinion. If we only tolerate speakers whose ideas are similar to our own, where do we draw the line? Censorship might seem fine when it comes to the Connerlys of the world, but who would be next? The gun rights advocate? The feminist? The gay rights activist? The fact that these individuals might have views that differ from yours doesn't mean their concerns aren't valid, and it doesn't mean they don't have the right to be heard. Silence one voice, and you might as well silence them all.

Kelsey Landhuis is a junior English major from Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ONE-ON-ONE

Groups should not have received so much



Jackie Gonzalez

It's time for another campus rant.

Last week, I was incredibly disappointed at the Funds Allotment Council's backing of Ward Connerly, the controversial speaker pushing to end affirmative action.

FAC needs to take a closer look at programs it is supporting.

The purpose of FAC is to provide financial assistance for the "intellectual and social development of students," according to the group's Web site. If this truly is the case, FAC should try harder to fund events with proposals that have potential, not just save its budget for events that have been successful in the past. In order for any organization to grow, it must begin with some sort of financial backing.

The FAC should be supporting environmental causes — I think eco-friendly issues support both social

and intellectual development — yet it denied two proposals from the Environmental Campus Organization and the Student Peace Alliance.

Despite the "extremely competitive" fight for funding last fall, FAC chose to grant more than one-eighth of its budget to one event — Ward Connerly. That's more than \$4,000.

As a result, FAC rejected numerous other applications for organizational funding. Perhaps FAC was misled. In the proposal by the College Republicans, College Libertarians and the mysterious organization that goes by the name of Leadership Forum, the proposed event, according to its budget, was titled "America's Promise Realized: Getting Beyond Race." Vague, but seemingly patriotic. Of course the FAC approved it, and the planning stages began. Except if you looked at any flyer around campus, all you saw was a bold, uncomfortable and risqué phrase: "End affirmative action."

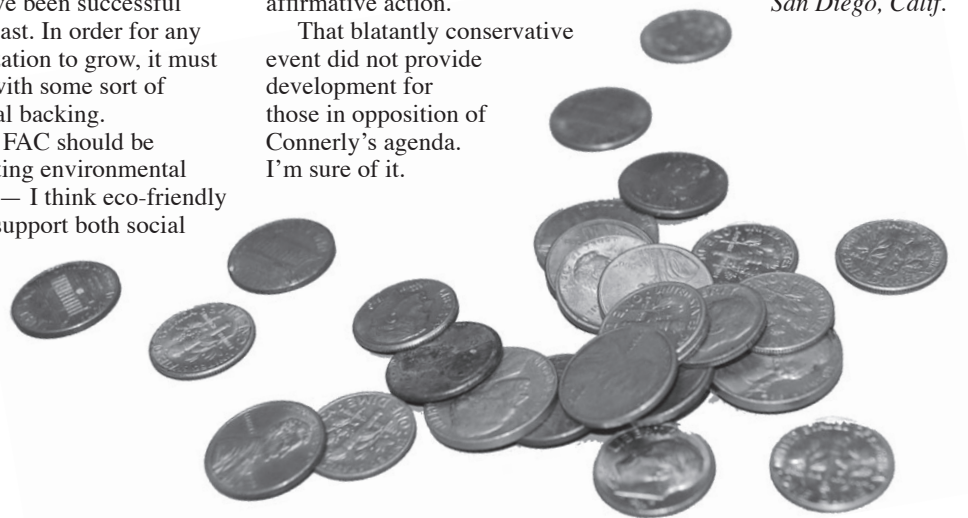
That blatantly conservative event did not provide development for those in opposition of Connerly's agenda. I'm sure of it.

FAC denied more than half of the Student Peace Alliance's request for funding to bring in a speaker for its peace week because of its apparently tight budget, granting \$600. Although this sounds like a lot, it is an incredibly measly and unfortunate amount compared to the massive gift to the Leadership Forum and cohorts.

FAC should seek to promote a diverse range of events and speakers with the hope that everyone on campus will be especially pleased by at least one event a semester, instead of hoping to cater to the majority with every event.

If FAC chose to equally distribute funds, not only would more organizations benefit from this program, it might encourage organizations to bring even more speakers to campus — classy, reputable ones. Funding Ward Connerly to the degree FAC did just doesn't add up to good sense.

Jackie Gonzalez is a junior history major from San Diego, Calif.



Student Research Conference should figure high on students' to-do lists



Andrew Kindiger

I can't help but notice that the collective sentiment regarding the Student Research Conference has become that today is yet another free day on our smorgasbord of spring holidays. But this day is supposed to be reserved for students who wish to take an extra step with their research and share it with professors and the University as a whole.

In class during the past two weeks, the annual Student Research Conference has been a subject discussed with some restraint. Students are encouraged to attend by teachers but bound by nothing more than personal interest and promises of extra credit. The lack of interest for this event is unfortunate.

The research conference serves as an opportunity for students to attempt to present a general thesis for the academic year. Seniors complete projects

geared toward capstone assignments and major research, and younger students experiment with ideas that might shape into life pursuits. The conference is an excellent opportunity for students to learn about the achievements attained by their peers, as well as to understand the tone for Truman-grade research and analysis.

I think the lack of student excitement is unjust in an atmosphere that should endorse the academic excellence of others. At the very least, it's a good idea for students to be aware of Truman's role as a scholarly institution and not simply a training ground for the job market.

As college students and emerging adults, now is the time to gain a perception of the state of affairs in a world that goes beyond meeting requirements and personal gratification in an academic environment. There is much to gain by showing an appreciation for emerging perspectives in broadening fields. No longer are the subjects being taught by editors and authors we will never meet but by people sitting next to us in class or at other universities across the nation. The research conference

should not be seen as a day to sleep until the middle of the afternoon. Students should avoid adhering to the same routine and take the opportunity to explore new ideas or possibly even pursue a developing interest in a major or minor. The conference is not only worthwhile to the researchers. The showcase of research is an academically diverse endeavor that will challenge the audience as much as the participants.

At this point, a student's academic disposition should be open to change and evolution. This doesn't mean people should feel obligated to heavily scrutinize their academic involvement, but in a way, every Truman student has a responsibility to engage in a collective research effort.

The papers written at this University represent the atmosphere for intellectual indulgence, at least as far as the student body is concerned. The research conference gives students that opportunity to present information in a professional manner and have other students judge the work in the same light.

Although students should feel encouraged to attend, there shouldn't have to be a sense

of obligation. Students already should have the drive to extend the academic environment beyond classes and tests alone. This is a time to get away from convention and strengthen the knowledge of an academic system. At the conference, students have a degree of freedom in what they present and complete all the work themselves.

The research conference does not have to be a bland experience that many only see as beneficial for sleeping in and finishing homework. It has the potential to be a day of growth and involvement. Because we are members of Truman's academic community we should at the very least try to spend a little time during the day to participate in the events.

Even if you are not presenting, it will be beneficial to go and experience a change of pace from the traditional classroom atmosphere and enter into an education dynamic where students showcase their academic endeavors.

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AROUND THE QUAD

Will you continue to dine at El Vaquero?



Elizabeth Shocklee
Freshman

"Yes — it doesn't really affect my choice of where to dine."



Megan Hunter
Alumna

"I like La Pachanga better so I don't go there anyways."



George Bernard Koors IV
Freshman

"I'll dine more there now because their street cred has gone up."

El Vaquero arrests show ill-placed national priorities



Phil Jarrett

The first time I rode to the new El Vaquero, it was in the back seat of a luxury car — you know, the type that has the back-up camera built into the trunk and the navigation system that talks to you through the state-of-the-art sound system. It was my friend's stepmom's car. And as we pulled up to the restaurant, she noticed a vehicle substantially shabbier than her own. The windows were tinted, and ornate lettering on the back window spelled out a Hispanic name.

"If you ever want to find good Mexican food," my friend's stepmom said, "all you need to do is follow a car that looks like that one."

A little part of me died right then. According to El Vaquero owner Taly Lopez, a raid of the restaurant last Friday by immigration authorities resulted in the detention of eight employees as well as some lunch patrons from another local restaurant. Adair County Prosecutor Mark Williams said the federal search warrant cited inappropriate use of social security numbers as grounds for the raid.

With roughly 12 million illegal immigrants in this country and nearly 12 percent of those working in food services illegally, one has to consider the unfortunate odds of the "man" targeting the best restaurant in Kirksville.

In fact, this is one of a series of stings on the El Vaquero chain. Lopez told the Index that he now plans on hiring non-Mexicans to work in his Mexican restaurant. That's right — no more Mexicans at the Mexican restaurant.

And here's another part of me dying. But let us put this in context. The "improper use of social security numbers" should not be any surprise. The Pew Hispanic Center reports that illegal

immigrants make up nearly 5 percent of the labor force, and since the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act established consequences for employers who deliberately hire illegal immigrants, fake IDs have been part of the game.

Lopez told the Index that he believed all his employees were legitimate citizens, and although that belief could be questioned, perhaps it is not so odd. Lopez said no employees were paid under the table and that the social security numbers in question were fake and not stolen. This has some interesting implications.

These men were taxpayers. And it is not too surprising, either. Annually, as much as \$7 billion in Social Security comes from the estimated two-thirds of the illegal immigrant population that pays payroll taxes attached to phony Social Security numbers. These tax dollars go toward programs in which these individuals likely will never get to participate.

In this age when xenophobic language about diseases and threats to national

security color the immigration debate, it is all too easy to demonize illegal immigrants. Even the name is a kind of a scarlet letter. Illegal immigrants, like they broke out of prison or something. And while we can talk crime statistics 'til we are blue in the face, these individuals at El Vaquero are illegal solely for being in the United States.

The irony really sinks in when you realize how much we accommodate this illegality. How can we have 5 percent of our workforce composed of so-called criminals if we were not getting something out of it?

Make no mistake, the raid on El Vaquero was a symbolic one — made to appease the kick-"em-out crowd who always have been more bark than bite. While meat packing plants in our own state exploit teams of illegal immigrants working in despicable conditions for long hours with no real protection from any on-site injury for the sake of cheap pork, the authorities raid the one place everyone expects to find illegal immigrants: a Mexican restaurant.

The sting was visible to seem as if something was being done about the nearly half a million immigrants who enter our country each year. In reality, America would be lost without this modern population of indentured servants who constantly pay into the system yet can never fully earn the ability to scale the economic ladder. By selectively enforcing our immigration policies, we create a work force that literally is trapped doing jobs that employers are unwilling to pay more for.

So who is the real parasite: the evil immigrants creeping into our country with the sinister intent to steal American jobs or the Americans who refuse to recognize 4 percent of their own population and actively accept tax dollars from phony Social Security numbers? "Gosh-dam illegals muckin' up our country. ... I'll have the fajitas, please."

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