

OUR VIEW

Mo. textbook price bill cracks publishers' grip

College students are tightwads. We'll penny pinch until our shoes wear down enough for our toes to scrape the pavement. We'll shove our whole wardrobe into one dryer to avoid the extra 75 cents it'd take to use two.

So who among us would want to shell out the \$50 price spike for a new edition of a textbook whose only updates are new photos in chapter four and a snazzy cover design? We venture to say very few.

Which is why Missouri house bill 2048, the Textbook Transparency Act, looks so promising to students like us. If passed, the bill would require all textbook publishers vending their wares in the state of Missouri to provide professors with both the price of the new edition and a description of exactly how it differs from older versions. The bill also would require companies to make these revision histories available for university bookstores to provide to students at the point of sale.

The idea is to prevent publishing companies from pawning out pricey new editions that only include inconsequential changes and to protect consumers from buying into them. Even professors don't want to waste money on a brand-new textbook with no new information. Not only would this help professors make more informed decisions about what textbooks they require, it would provide frugal students with a valuable tool.

Don't want to put down extra cash for a new edition? With the Textbook Transparency Act in place, you could march down to the bookstore and find out what's changed.

If you're paying the big-ticket for a preface you can photocopy in the library, forget it. Save yourself some dough and order last year's book online. Or contact your professor and ask why, if almost nothing has been

changed since the original, did he or she require the new edition? This bill doesn't guarantee a price break with every new textbook that rolls off the press, but it does give students and professors the resources to ensure they

get what they're paying for. It gets better, too. With textbook transparency, any company selling a book with supplementary materials attached would have to make those materials

available for sale individually as well. This means that instead of paying close to \$100 at the bookstore for a world music book that comes complete with CDs of tribal yodeling from across the globe, you could pick up the disks at full price and find the textbook cheaper somewhere else.

This bill is entirely designed to hold publishing companies accountable and save college students money. And we can't argue with that.

If you're on the same page as we are, voice your approval for textbook transparency. Stop wasting time idly griping about the cost of your books this semester and do something about it.

Go to www.house.mo.gov and contact your local representative, Rebecca McClanahan, D-Kirksville, and tell her to support the Textbook Transparency Act. Better yet, contact Rep. Gayle Kingery, chair of the Higher Education Committee and a co-signer to the bill, and ask for a hearing for HB 2048.

Right now there is no hearing scheduled for the bill and this legislative session ends May 16, so contact your representatives now to get the ball rolling. As a student, you could even testify — in person or in writing — in support of textbook transparency.

Sure, it's not instant cash in your pocket, but this bill is a good investment toward protecting your rights as a consumer.

Voice your approval for textbook transparency. Stop wasting time idly griping about the cost of your books this semester and do something.

CORRECTIONS

- A features brief on page 9 of the Feb. 14 issue of the Index incorrectly stated the date of the Vagina Monologues. The Monologues will take place on March 19 and 20, not Feb. 18 and 19.



Letters to the Editor

Rather than MRC, we need focus on underprivileged

When I read the title of Alex Hayden's column, "Men's Resource Center would benefit all without harm to WRC," in the Feb. 14 issue of the Index, I mistakenly assumed it would be both ridiculous and chauvinist. I was pleasantly surprised to find the article by far more misinformed and absurd than misogynistic.

First, Hayden is calling for a center that helps men with "issues of gender and identity," to parallel the help the Women's Resource Center offers to women. As an executive board member of the WRC, I wish I could say that we focused directly on such issues, but we do not. Our programs are not designed to help with gender identity, gender performance or gender confusion.

Unfortunately, the WRC does not offer resources to biological women questioning their gender as women or biological men questioning their gender as men. Although we recently have been working to make the WRC less heteronormative, we have been unable to focus on GLBT issues as much as we would like. Thus, Hayden misunderstands the WRC's purpose and goals. The WRC does not even do what Hayden proposes for a Men's Resource Center.

The WRC works to help individuals who are biologically sexed as women deal with the oppression they face in our patriarchal culture. Our programs focus on issues like women's education, health care, job opportunities, body image, pay scale inequalities and violence. Although the WRC is working very hard to increase attendance at its events, with the exception of The Vagina Monologues, we usually do not draw a big crowd. If most of Truman's students do not utilize the WRC, what makes Hayden think they will use the MRC? Has Hayden ever even been to the WRC?

If he has, he should know that we do, in fact, have many books on gender and identity issues for both men and women. The fact of the matter is that most Truman students have never been to the WRC or even know where we are located, in the SUB Down Under.

Of all of Hayden's assumptions, there is one that is perhaps the most offensive: the belief that by adding a Men's Resource Center, everyone would have a happy place dedicated specifically to helping them with their gender and identity needs.

Yes, having an MRC and a WRC would help individuals who identify (within the binary) as a man or a woman. But what about those Truman students who are intersexed, transsexual or transgendered? Are we just going to ignore their needs? Truman's campus should not.

Furthermore, as Joey Risch wonderfully noted in his "Around the Quad" comment, men (especially white, heterosexual, middle-class men) are privileged in our country, culture and, I would venture to say, even on our campus. I think starting a student movement to found new resource centers at Truman is a marvelous idea. But why are we not making a call for a GLBTQ or Queer Resource Center, a center focused on the needs of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or a center focused on the needs of our disabled peers? Why aren't we working as a campus to expand the Multicultural Affairs Center?

Frankly, I would love to see, and work for, a center like Hayden is describing. But that center should not be mislabeled as a Men's or Women's Resource Center. Let's fight the binary here, people. The center Hayden is describing that focuses on "the issues of gender and identity" could only accurately be founded, called and exercised as a Gender Resource Center.

Or maybe if Truman wants to be really progressive, a Sex, Gender and Orientation (SGO) Resource Center. We must strive as a campus and community to offer resources for everyone whether they identify as straight, gay, trans,

female, male, intersex or even if they don't identify as anything. I applaud Hayden's call for change. We should be making more of them. But in doing so, let's help the people who really need it: the underprivileged.

Angela Carter
Junior

Terrible tragedies deserve remembrance, prayers

I am deeply saddened that nothing has been done in memory of those innocent students killed at Northern Illinois University last Thursday. A large number of Truman students are from Illinois and many know individuals at NIU. My sister just graduated from NIU last month, and I thank God she was not there. Unfortunately, my high school friend was not as lucky. He was in that classroom at the time of the shooting.

But I know I am not the only one who knows people who were affected by the Valentine's Day school shooting. I have talked to a few students at Truman who were affected and who also felt disappointed that so little has been done. The flags were not even flown at half mast the day after the shooting. These terrible tragedies seem to be happening more and more, but that by no means should be used as an excuse not to recognize these terrible events. The less we recognize these tragic events, the less affected we are by them. When people become numb to violence, terrible events like what happened at Virginia Tech and NIU are allowed to occur.

Five innocent college students died last Thursday because of reckless hate. Four sisters and daughters and one brother and son were unjustly and prematurely taken out of this world. I think the Truman campus basically has ignored this. I even went to church last Sunday at the Newman Center because I thought people would want to pray about it, but no one mentioned it.

I want to see change. I think that these individuals deserve a peace vigil just like the one for Virginia Tech. The flag should be flown at half-mast this Thursday, so that people know what has happened. I understand that the Virginia Tech shooting caused many more deaths, but is that how we measure a tragedy these days? By the number of innocent deaths? If so, then there's something terribly wrong.

Marianne Richter
Sophomore

Alumnus appalled at show of 'tasteless, lewd' dancing

As an alumnus, I was excited to attend a Truman basketball game this past weekend. I was entertained by the actual sporting event, in which our men's team lost a hard-fought contest, but that is not the topic of this letter.

When it came time for halftime entertainment, the announcer introduced in succession three groups affiliated with the University. I must say, I was dismayed at the offerings of two of these groups. First, the Showgirls took center stage and performed in a sexually suggestive manner. The third group, Illusion Danz Team, also offered up more lewd and tasteless dancing. I guess I was under the false impression that the athletic events endorsed by this University were supposed to be family affairs. Two of the three halftime acts did not fit this bill. I certainly am glad there were not many children in attendance to witness this entertainment.

Jason Hull
Alumnus

Kirksville should implement smoking permits for bars

In the Feb. 14 issue of the Index, a letter to the editor written by Craig Hermann had some conflicting statements. He closed by saying, "If you have a problem with the

smoking ban, you're in the unfortunate minority." That's along the same thought line as, "Whites are in the majority, so let's ban minorities from our bars and restaurants." The argument against this might be that most minorities are protected by the Constitution and smokers aren't. OK, but neither are non-smokers.

This ban was passed by about 10 percent of the population of Kirksville over the opposition of about 7 percent — not much of a mandate. We have lost more than 40 jobs and three businesses because of it. This vote never was a health issue, but a business owner's rights issue. Illinois is considering allowing businesses to buy a smoking permit with the state's ban, thus allowing business owners to decide who they want to cater to.

This would be a good idea for Kirksville as well. Why do non-smokers want to go to places that don't want their business? It should be the owner who decides who he or she wants to cater to, not the public.

Charles Cannaday
Kirksville resident

Argument for smoking ban still attacks property rights

Craig Hermann brought up some good points when addressing my argument against smoking bans. Unfortunately, he did so with false analogies. He said allowing smoking in private establishments was akin to giving 10-year-olds alcohol or driving drunk without a seat belt because a bar and a car are private property too. Underage smoking is illegal just like underage drinking. I understand age limits for certain activities might be necessary to protect those too young to know what's best for them, and I do not advocate any private business breaking those laws.

Although I did not mention it in my last letter, I would agree with a law that prevented people too young to smoke legally from going into any building that allowed smoking. That would be an incentive for businesses that usually have children as customers to ban smoking, but still it still would give bars the right to allow smoking. All patrons are adults and can judge for themselves whether the health risk of being around secondhand smoke is worth it or not.

The other analogies he used concerned drunken driving and seat belt laws. I understand the drunken driving issue. Roads are public property, and it makes sense to regulate them so people don't get hurt by other drivers and so all drivers can enjoy their common property. If the roads were privately owned, I would be against any such laws and would advocate leaving it up to the owner to make the rules. In either case the analogies had little to do with the smoking ban.

I do not ignore the health issues of secondhand smoke. I understand that smoking and secondhand smoke are dangerous. I just think that if people want to smoke in a building with the owner's permission, and if people want to expose themselves to those conditions, then they should be able to. Businesses aren't forcing people to expose themselves to secondhand smoke. They are giving people permission to use their property and getting paid for it.

Sadly, Hermann believes that being in the majority that agrees with a smoking ban gives him the right to attack property rights. In reality, rights, like those protected in the Bill of Rights, were created to protect the minority from attack by the government and by the majority that would benefit from denying those rights. I think all Americans would agree that rights like freedom of speech, privacy and property should be protected, not taken away one by one by a self-serving majority.

Justin Logan
Sophomore

INDEX

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Editorial Policy

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