

Responsibility for campus security falls on all



Kelsey Landhuis

Stop me if you've heard this one: A non-student with lewd intentions foils security measures and finds his way into a residence hall.

Sound familiar? I am not talking about the intrusion that occurred in January. I am talking about one that happened in November 2000, when, according to the Nov. 16, 2000, issue of the Index, a non-student gained access to a women's bathroom in Missouri Hall and exposed himself to four female students. Dobson Hall's recent incident, in which an intruder made his way past the night monitor

and into a student's room (see the Jan. 24 issue of the Index), makes it apparent how little campus security has improved in the past seven years. The University, the Department of Public Safety and even students have not been as concerned about safety as we should be, and it is time to do something about it. Student Senate's resolution to force a meeting of the campus safety committee (see story, Page 1) is a step in the right direction, but more extreme measures must be taken to ensure that there are no repeats of the residence hall intrusions.

DPS, University administration and students all are guilty of inadequate responses to security breaches. The Missouri Hall incident resulted in the installation of locks on community bathroom doors, a measure that students continually defeat by propping doors open and sharing their codes with others. After the Virginia Tech shooting, Truman took the minimal step of instituting an emergency text messaging system. In response to this

year's Dobson attack and the Northern Illinois shooting, Senate only now is calling for the meeting of the campus safety committee to discuss ways of improving security. Time and time again, local and national events that should have forced us all to take a closer look at campus security have produced apathy and half-hearted attempts at superficial change. What will have to occur for us to take campus safety seriously?

Senate's call for a meeting of the campus safety committee is a nice gesture, but if an attack on a student failed to prompt change in University policy, a Senate resolution won't succeed either. Even if Senate is successful in forcing a meeting, the committee will not be able to change the campus security situation. It originally was formed to regulate public safety officers' firearms, not make major changes to University policy.

We should not be asking what is basically an informal oversight committee that never has met regularly to undertake

the task of evaluating and improving campus security. We should be insisting on the formation of a new committee with the express purpose of taking a long, hard look at campus security and implementing real, effective measures for improving it.

Cost, frankly, should not be an object. Students have a right to be safe on campus, and ensuring that we are should be more important than buying synthetic turf for the football field or renovating the Student Union Building. When University officials blame the absence of automatic locks on residence hall room doors and electronic access for outside doors on a lack of funds, they are putting a price tag on our safety.

How many dollars is a student's life worth? If additional security measures are able to save just one resident from the physical and psychological trauma of an assault, or prevent a death, then they will be worth every penny.

It would be easy to blame the problem

entirely on DPS, Residence Life or University administration, but we students have demonstrated a disturbing lack of concern for our own security. We tend to think of campus as a bubble of safety where nothing can harm us. We scoff at measures designed to protect us, such as locking the outside doors at 10:30 p.m. or requiring a code to enter a community bathroom. We walk outside alone in the dark and leave our dorm rooms unlocked at night. However, this feeling of invincibility is merely an illusion.

If perusing DPS's daily crime log doesn't convince students of the real risks that exist even on University grounds, the recent event at Northern Illinois should. The sobering truth is that dangers can and do exist even here. We cannot plan for every possible scenario, but we definitely can do a better job than we are now.

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

AROUND THE QUAD

Have you or do you plan to study abroad?



"I'm going to Florence in the summer, and I'm going to take a wine-tasting course."

*Jenna Conway
Junior*



"I pretty much plan on going to Japan."

*Autumn Hepburn
Freshman*



"I haven't but I'd really like to. I don't know if it's really promoted all that much, but I'd definitely want to."

*Shane Haas
Sophomore*



"I have — I went on the Europe in Transition trip this summer, and it was really awesome."

*Christina Ringwald
Senior*

Being appreciative of cultures provides window into diversity



Andrew Kindiger

Last year when I, along with other students at my high school, was beginning my college search, it seemed that diversity was a large issue. Many of my friends and acquaintances stressed the importance of meeting new people and exposing themselves to different environments. This was an important issue to me as well. But although the colleges I researched claimed that their campuses were diverse, their statistics begged to differ.

Truman was no exception in terms of both racial and cultural diversity. When I arrived at Truman, I was excited to see that there was a population of international students as well as American students who had different ethnicities from mine, but I could not help but notice that the population of our campus is heavily Caucasian. Not only that, but during conversations with other students, I found that many shared the same religious views and had attended schools with religious affiliations.

Which brings me to the question, is it fair to call Truman's campus a diverse environment? Although I believe that Truman has a degree of diversity, an overwhelming majority of students and professors share the same race and religion and come from similar cities. Despite this, there is a mix of students who have different racial and cultural backgrounds, presenting an opportunity for diverse cultural interaction even if it is somewhat limited. In light of this, Truman offers such activities as Diversity Week and Campus Town, a prejudice awareness workshop that is coming up Feb. 29 to April 1.

But why should our appreciation for other cultures and our awareness of different ethnicities be consolidated into a span of a few days?

Reserving a few special days for such acknowledgements does not specifically advocate a lack of cultural appreciation for the rest of the time, but on a campus with limited diversity, it seems somewhat self-defeating to only encourage multicultural relationships on a

handful of days. Even a week devoted to diversity is not enough to fully understand the nature of another culture.

My problem, though, does not lie with the limited days the University allots for cultural expansion, but students' lack of motivation to reach out to other cultures on campus and become more aware of different cultures worldwide. We should not have to wait until Truman suggests that students of different races and cultures blend. We have the opportunity to make the campus environment a culturally appreciative one, even if it is somewhat lacking in diversity.

This does not mean you should feel compelled to run up to the next person of a different ethnicity you see and press them for their life story. It is about making a conscious effort to become more culturally sensitive and appreciative.

The best way to do this is simply to explore. There are opportunities on this campus to take a class exploring a different culture, become involved with a cultural club or even be bold enough to discuss religion and cultural differences with another student whose views diverge from your own.

Studying abroad also should be something more students consider. Just because you might not be majoring in a foreign language does not mean that you couldn't benefit from learning in another country. Because Truman is not dense with diversity, it is our responsibility as students to become more aware of other cultures — not only to better educate ourselves, but also to familiarize ourselves with a life outside of campus.

And honestly, even great activities such as a prejudice awareness workshop are not going to be able to offer a substantial impact on a campus where diversity serves as more of a rare privilege than a reality.

Because the majority of students attending this school are white and from the Midwest, there is a good chance that diversity is a somewhat unfamiliar concept. Thus, it is important not only to respect other cultures that you may encounter but also to explore different cultural opportunities even though options may be limited outside of Diversity Week.

Andrew Kindiger is a freshman English major from Liberty, Mo.

Conference Day should move from Wednesday to end of week



Jackie Gonzalez

Did you hear? Yesterday was the eighth annual Truman State University Conference Day.

Did I attend any conferences, you ask? Well, no. Did any of my friends? I can't be sure, but it's not likely.

The University Conference Day — no offense — has never been an event students flock to. Unfortunately, it too often becomes a day for students (and some professors) to catch up on studies and sleep. For some, it's that perfect Tuesday night to go to bars and enjoy the karaoke without the worry of sleeping through your Wednesday morning class.

Of course, the purpose of Conference Day is to grant everyone in the University community the chance to discuss important issues about the University's future. By canceling classes, the administration allows time for both students and professors to attend and puts the importance of the conferences on the same level as classes. Conference Day encompasses the very idea of reflective practice, and we should get more involved than we do.

Now that that's out of the way, let

me get the point: I think it's still fair to say — again, no offense — most students do not attend conferences on Conference Day. Part of this has to do with the way the conferences are marketed, which emphasizes the future and how the University can improve in years to come (when we won't be here). Another part is the conferences themselves, which too often just don't cater to student interests.

Offering workshops that discuss the trials and tribulations of teaching online courses or developing an enrollment management plan just doesn't rake in the kiddos, plain and simple. The overall theme, "Preparing Truman Students to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century," clearly says that the conference mostly is about prepping professors and staff on future teaching methods, in a future when we have all graduated.

So here's my big question: Why does the University schedule this conference on a Wednesday? Rather, why is University Conference Day on Wednesday instead of, say, Friday? The conferences just as easily could take place on any weekday, but from where I'm sitting, this was done with the intent to prevent students from going home for the weekend.

But why? Although it does hinder one's ability to go home, it in no way encourages students to attend the conference. To put it another way, if students are going to the conferences, they will go whether they take place on

a Monday, a Wednesday or whenever. But if the students aren't going to go to the conferences, scheduling them on a Wednesday isn't going to make them show up. In essence, the argument in favor of a Wednesday conference is that, because the conferences are on Wednesday, students will have nothing better to do than show up.

But does that really work? I don't know, but it doesn't seem like there's a strong drive on the part of students to come now. For the sake of the people who would like to go home or relax on a long weekend (and who don't show up to the Conference Day anyway), we should move Conference Day to a Monday or a Friday.

Changing the day of the conference potentially could even encourage student participation. If it were on a Monday, we'd have the weekend to finish up our assignments instead of skipping the conferences to stay in and prepare for Thursday's classes.

If the day of the week were changed, it wouldn't affect the agenda or the overall structure of the conferences at all. If students truly are interested in attending events on Conference Day, they still would have the opportunity to do so. And, of course, those who aren't interested would then have the option of leaving town. No harm, no foul, right?

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

Roommate-hunters need not fear the reaper of disastrous choices



Brenna McDermott

Finding a good roommate can be a lot like dating.

There always are going to be couples that just naturally click together, and that's that. For some people, the attraction is immediate. Finding a roomie can be equally simple. Maybe someone just stands out to you as someone you would love to live with. Some meet their roommates in daily passing, whether they are a classmate, a neighbor or someone you continually pass out next to at a party. For some people, finding that special someone is just that simple.

And for some, it isn't. Just like online dating, there is an online roommate search — the Roommate Search Assistant from Residence Life. Dating services like eHarmony or Match.com are established to help those frustrated daters find someone they wouldn't stumble across in daily passing. And it looks like fun. Answering tons of questions and looking at tons of profiles to try to decide, based upon written words and one picture, if a

person is datable. Maybe it isn't so bad. After all, it's just one date — or even just coffee. By choosing to date someone on the site, you are not entering into a contract with them. It's just dinner and a movie.

But for roommate hunters, it can be four months of hell.

Through the Roommate Search Assistant, students in need of a roommate can fill out a short questionnaire, including music preferences, attitudes toward alcohol and personal space and other preferences. Like online dating, this can be disastrous. Picking out a suitable roommate based on 500 words or less is a hefty task to accomplish. Not to mention that other than things a potential roomie chooses to reveal, you don't know anything about that person. And human beings are not known for their honesty or realistic self-perception.

A person might say they go to bed early, but his or her early might be as soon as the sun rises. I might say I am nice, but in reality, that probably isn't entirely true.

The Roommate Search Assistant gives you a chance to pick out someone who seems like a good match. But just because it seems that you would get along on paper doesn't guarantee you will be buddies. Chances are that if you don't have a roommate lined up yet, whomever you end up living with probably won't be your soulmate.

But that's OK.

Look on the bright side: You can control how much or how little you see your roommate. Avoiding your room by spending time in the library or the Student Union Building is a valid option. Going to the lounge to hang with friends will keep you apart even more. The only time you really have to see each other is when you wake up or go to sleep. And, if you are like me, chatting is not your priority at 8 a.m. The situation isn't as bad as it seems.

Even if you won't be great friends, that doesn't mean you can't be great roommates. It's always fun to laugh and share your news with friends, but sometimes the best roommates are those with whom you don't chat. It's nice for everyone to have a little peace and quiet from time to time.

Maybe you and your roommate aren't made for each other. But understand that your roommate might be just as bummed out that he or she has to live with you. And no, it isn't the best feeling in the world to know your roommate is not thrilled to be with you, but this isn't an eHarmony commercial. You don't have to love each other, but you should share a mutual respect for one another.

And, if nothing else, you do have that in common.

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WEB POLL

Are you concerned about meth in your community?



This week's question:
Is the University community doing enough to protect the student body?
Vote online at trumanindex.com