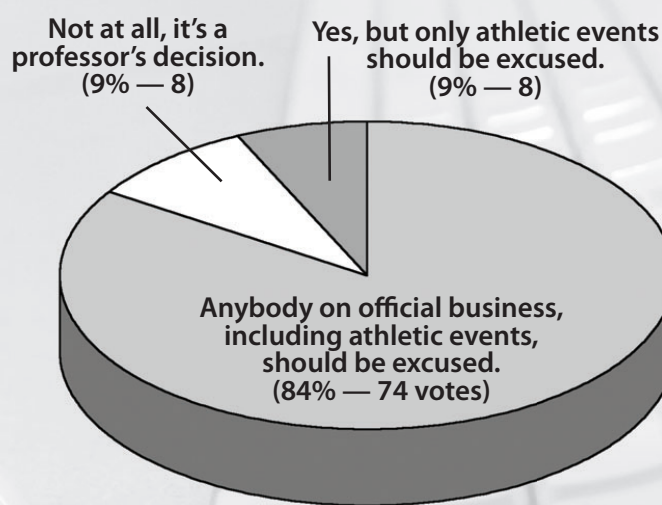


WEB POLL

Should professors excuse athletes on scholarships for missing class for games?



This week's question:

Do you support the idea of superdelegates?

Vote online at trumanindex.com

Text message testing can't erase fears of campus shootings



Brenna McDermott

"This is a test of the Truman Emergency Warning System. No action is needed."

Reading these words Tuesday was a relief. I was relieved because I knew that the Emergency Text Messaging system worked.

I was relieved because I knew that, should something tragic happen, students and faculty would be warned and protected. But relief soon gave way to my tendency to worry and overthink things as the text message brought more questions to my mind. It raised questions about our safety and protocol in life-threatening situations. Most of us have never had a life-or-death experience.

So being a negative, expect-the-worst type of person, I feel totally unprepared and uninformed as to what I should do if there is an attack on the school.

The Department of Public Safety has an Active Shooter Response Guide on its Web site outlining the best way for faculty members or professors to protect their students, which includes barricading doors, turning off lights and calling 911.

It makes me feel better to know that there is a plan for faculty and students in classrooms, but not everyone would be in a classroom during such an occurrence. Students could be anywhere, from the Student Union Building to the library or the middle of the Quad. What happens then? If 200 people sitting in the SUB get a text message about an attack on the school, won't mass hysteria ensue?

I realize that there are an infinite

number of unfortunate situations students could be in, and it is impossible to plan for all of them, but I think some of these situations should be addressed. There should be some simple guidelines for other places where hiding is impossible or hundreds of people will all panic.

The Active Shooter Response Guide needs more depth and breadth so students can prepare themselves no matter where they are on campus if such a tragedy should occur.

It is frightening to even talk about this topic, let alone imagine that a school shooting actually could happen to us. But these are the times we live in. Being prepared is the only way I can feel safe in such a situation. I don't have weapons or brute strength to defend myself, but I hope that I would have a plan – a plan that will get my fellow students and me out of such a horrible situation, a plan that hopefully will help me out-think the bad guys and remain calm in the face of danger.

Part of that planning is the students' responsibility as well. It is difficult to come to grips with the idea that something so horrible could happen to us, but we need to have the wisdom and the foresight to realize that in the end, we are responsible for our own lives. Neither DPS nor our professors, student advisers or friends can provide individual protection for us all. We must all prepare for how we will protect ourselves in certain situations.

Whether that means learning to run really fast, picking bushes to hide behind or finding all the good hiding places in the library, we must all prepare ourselves for whatever lies ahead. A text message is a start, but ultimately, we must take it from there.

Brenna McDermott is a freshman undeclared major from St. Louis, Mo.

Letters to the Editor

Gun show article needed more balance in light of shootings

Within days after the shooting at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, an institution comparable to our own, a one-page spread appeared in the Index with half the width of the page devoted to pictures of high-powered rifles and the upper half of the page portraying a kindly Shrine Club representative selling raffle tickets for a shotgun at the Kirksville gun show last weekend. We all understand that the hunting and gun culture is strong in this part of the country, as is the presence of the NRA lobby, and that this gun show might be considered one of many community events worthy of extensive coverage. But, particularly in view of the recent, horrifying tragedies at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois, it frankly was disturbing that there was no balance to this publicity coverage given to local Kirksville vendors and community activists using the sale of guns for charitable causes.

There should have been more in-depth coverage of the other side of the issue, in view of the recent deaths and increasing fear on college campuses in areas where gun culture predominates. It was informative and useful to point out, as you did, that these gun shows are forums for debate and teaching proper and responsible usage. But it also would have been helpful and informative to the community for this coverage of the gun show to examine

the fact that there is a loophole at gun shows. Convicted felons, domestic violence abusers and those who are dangerously mentally ill can walk into any gun show and buy weapons from unlicensed sellers without any barriers or checks imposed. This is a loophole that gun control advocates are trying to address.

I understand the argument of critics of gun control who affirm the right to responsibly bear arms as the Second Amendment of our Constitution guarantees. But, with deep respect to the local Shriners, I suggest that it is not necessary to help promote gun shows in order to raise funds for children, who are most likely to be innocent victims of gun violence in this country.

In view of the frightening events which took place on the Northern Illinois and Virginia Tech campuses and the safety communication measures presently being put in place on this campus and across the country, we really needed this article to examine this issue thoroughly and fairly, with diplomacy and firm objectivity. If you didn't intend this article as mere publicity or glorification of the gun culture, then more critical, respectful but objective coverage and discussion would have been of tremendous service to the community.

*B.L. McLane-Iles
Professor of French*

Redefining relationship with Truman benefits all



Alex Hayden

Since the creation of money, everything has been a business. Farming, traveling and yes, even school became a business when money entered the picture.

Yet there is something different in the way a school is run as a business. In most businesses, consumers pay for the product or service after they receive it. School, on the other hand, has students paying before they really know what the service and product are. They have an idea of what the service is and how the product will come out, but nothing close to an actual understanding.

If you have not yet figured out what service and product I am talking about, it is the service of teaching and its product, education.

As every college student knows, we pay for our education before we receive it. But it's pretty clear that there are no guarantees or refunds. If you do not like your experience, you either put up with it, go to another school or just drop out altogether. Of course, if you're on scholarship, you'll likely go with the first option, and if you're lucky enough to have a good chunk of your own change, then you can afford the luxury of going somewhere else.

All in all, though, it seems like the students' voices concerning their education are not the ones heard.

Alumni actually get a decent say in the University because of their potential to give back.

When students have complaints, they often are overlooked or just listened to and not acted upon.

However, when the state complains about something, the school is expected to act. Heck, even when a parent calls up the University and files a complaint, the school is more likely to take action.

Some of us as students are the ones actually paying our school bills. We are the ones paying for the service and the product, but the supplier (a.k.a. the University) seems to care little about what we as consumers have to say about its services and products. In fact, it is not until we are alumni who potentially can give back to the school that we have a voice. And, even then, only if you are making large donations do you get a real voice concerning the direction of the University.

Before I go any further, I would like to make one thing clear. You might be thinking that I am one of those students who feels like I should get a certain grade because I already paid my tuition or that I have some personal vendetta against Truman. Neither is the case. I am just stating from a student perspective how the University is being run and analyzing its way of operating as a business, nothing more.

In fact, I am examining students as consumers and the University as a producer because I hope I can show how the process can be made better for everyone. The solution I offer isn't a complex one, but I think it will help out on the whole. Although students do not have much voice at the University right now, it does not mean we won't when we graduate.

As I have alluded to, alumni actually get to have a decent say in the University because of their potential to give back. And although we are not alumni yet, we can remind administrators and even professors that their current actions will affect our future interactions with the University. If we look back on our Truman experience and are dissatisfied, we simply can turn away from any continuing relationship with the University. When enough alumni do this, it grabs the attention of the school.

If both faculty and staff are aware that their interactions with students will later shape the University, I think student relations will improve. We as students need to be the ones reminding the University of this. University officials don't know who will have success in the world outside of school, and if the University hopes the alumni will share their success, then it needs to listen to all of its students.

Otherwise, Truman might find itself missing out on opportunities that are instead given to another school, all because it chose to overlook its consumers.

Alex Hayden is a senior philosophy and religion and communication major from Jefferson City, Mo.

Truman doesn't really live up to liberalism of the liberal arts



Andrew Kindiger

A well-balanced education is something of a myth to me.

The concept of being a well-rounded student seems like an effort best taken on by an individual opposed to an institution. However, at Truman, students are told that a liberal arts education can make a student well-rounded and able to continue learning even after a degree is received. But what exactly is a liberal arts education? During the first couple weeks of school I thought I knew, but my perceptions quickly changed.

It seems that if a particular curriculum is called liberal, something ought to be liberated. However, at Truman, students are not liberated from grades or a particular accumulation of certain classes. The majority of students still adhere to the standards provided by a particular major, even though the option to create your own major exists. And ultimately, education is approached very pragmatically.

True liberal arts schools do exist, such as Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash. At Evergreen, grades are not given in an effort to achieve a strong comprehensive education where learning is not justified by an end. The students who attend Evergreen go to college to appreciate academic growth as opposed to getting a particular degree, and classes are geared more

toward student involvement. Ironically, Evergreen, like Truman, is a public institution. Often colleges offering similar curriculums, such as Reed College and Columbia College in Chicago, are private and costly.

Truman has the opportunity to offer a public education in terms of price and availability, but it also has the potential to offer a private education in terms of quality and class size. Truman has the potential to combine many components that make up a true liberal arts institution. Our small class sizes would allow for strong engagement between students and teachers, and our students with high academic standing surely would be up to the challenge of guiding learning to be more comprehensive.

I admit that I have taken classes at Truman that allow a refreshing degree of academic freedom, but sadly those classes only are sprinkled among other courses that tend to take an extremely conventional approach to education.

I think the University is slightly to blame. It seems that liberal arts is used as more of a catchphrase to embrace all of Truman's positive qualities, such as small class sizes and a high-performing student body. The true meaning of liberal arts is lost in a list of LSP classes and not truly embraced for what it is.

I think Truman is not a liberal arts school in terms of freedom to take a variety of classes simply because there is not a demand for that type of education. If students wish to push the bounds of a traditional education, they must demand it. Success at Truman is more or less laid out in terms of a schedule of classes and scoring an important position in extra-curricular activities.

Education can exist outside of classrooms and can be self-directed, but there are still thousands of students sitting in classes because we live in a society that holds its citizens to certain requirements in order to excel in particular fields. It seems that at Truman, education is not truly liberated due to a lack of concern from students about how the University directs education. I think instructors at Truman would take a more liberal approach to class if students showed a willingness to embrace learning on a level beyond points on a test or a grade given at the end of a class.

If you are comfortable with a curriculum that reinforces a desire to check off requirements, I encourage you to ignore this column and slide back into the confines of educational boundaries. However, if you believe that education can become more of a process and that Truman has the potential to embrace such a mandate, it is your responsibility as a student and an individual to show a willingness to approach learning in a creative way.

Students at Truman have the potential to become more involved with the learning process. Learning does not have to be about chasing grades. We should feel encouraged to become more involved in our classes in terms of what is being discussed and not simply what is turned in and evaluated. We might not be able to abolish grades, but we, as students, surely have the ability to make the learning process more comprehensive and truly uphold what it means to receive a liberal education.

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

Temporary disability shows how life can be with limited mobility



Jackie Gonzalez

Crutches suck. Because of what I'd consider either karma or an act of God, I slipped on an icy side street a couple of weeks ago and dislocated my knee.

This injury forced me to be really bedridden for a solid week, and completely incapable of doing anything productive. Two weeks later, I finally have started a valiant attempt to get myself above water because right now I'm trapped under mountains of uncompleted assignments.

Granted, my current handicap is temporary, and in no way comparable to a permanent disability, but using crutches for the past couple of weeks really has changed my campus perspective. It makes me appreciate things like a smoothly paved walkway, an easy-to-access elevator or a closer parking space.

Nobody should have to feel unable to succeed at the University because of a physical handicap.

It also has made me aware of some of the issues surrounding those with both permanent and temporary disabilities. Truman, a place where I'm already constantly being challenged academically, presented me with a variety of new challenges to conquer – physical ones.

When I first had to remove my leg brace, which extended from my upper thigh to my lower calf, my roommate and I panicked because we did not know how to properly put it back onto my terribly swollen knee.

Having just spent the night in the emergency room, I had little memory and was of no help. My roommate called the Student Health Center to no avail. No one was willing to assist me, nor could they refer us to anyone who could. It might not be in their job description, but to me, ignoring a student in urgent need seems like ignoring common decency.

For some, a trek to Barnett without crutches could be considered a fun, adventurous romp, but for me, it was a terrifying trip with potholes and slippery slopes.

Yet I must make the trek because my request for a permit to let me park in the Barnett lot was refused by the University. In order to receive a permit, apparently I have to go through the Missouri Department of Motor Vehicles, apply for a temporary handicap permit and simply wait it out.

My situation is frustrating enough as it is. Getting help putting on clothes and not being able to wear pants in 20-degree weather is enough of a pain for me. Plus, I already have had to temporarily forfeit my beloved radio show because it is on the fourth floor of Dobson Hall, which has no elevator.

Temporary or not, my injury was not intentional – so neither I nor anyone in a similar situation should ever have to feel unable to succeed at the University (or even make it across campus) because of a physical handicap.

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