

Morning-after pill provides necessary options



Brenna McDermott

Some people in this world must be perfect. They must have gone their whole lives without making a mistake. They look down on others who do, and they aren't interested in helping the less than perfect bunch of us. I guess these people have never needed to rewrite a horribly written paper. And I know for a fact that they've never made a mistake by having sex. Also, their condoms have never ripped, they've never forgotten to take a birth control pill, nor have they ever had stupid, unprotected sex with a total stranger. I know all this because

there are people in this world who adamantly are opposed to emergency contraception, which is a solution for all of these mistakes (except for rewriting a paper, of course). But a solution for what exactly? A solution for pregnancy? A solution for an unwanted child? You may be thinking that taking emergency contraception is no different from an abortion. But it is different. Plan B — the brand name for the morning-after pill — is not an abortion pill. It is a prevention pill. If you are already pregnant, Plan B will not abort the pregnancy, according to the Plan B Web site. If the morning-after pill was more accessible, we could reduce the estimated 854,122 legal abortions that took place in 2003 in the United States. So all we need to do is make sure that Plan B is being used. Easier said than done. Yes, it is relatively easy to get a prescription from your doctor or the Student Health Center for the

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morning-after pill, but what if you need Plan B on the weekend? What if you need a contraceptive and Planned Parenthood is closed? Emergency contraception is a time-sensitive medicine. Taking it within 72 hours after unprotected sex gives you only an 89 percent chance of preventing pregnancy, but the odds of preventing a pregnancy get better if Plan B is taken within 24 hours of intercourse. So if your doctor is in Hawaii, you are screwed — no pun intended. Emergency contraception needs to be more widely available. If

pharmacies would keep Plan B in stock, it would be easier for women to get the morning-after pill sooner. Am I saying that pharmacies should be handing out Plan B like vitamins? No. Am I saying pharmacies should be passing out Fred Flintstone-shaped contraceptive pills to any thirteen-year-old who walks through the door? No. Emergency contraception is not something that should be taken lightly or often. But, when a mistake is made, there should be a way to remedy it. And there shouldn't have to be a treasure hunt to get to it. This doesn't mean it should be available on the shelf next to the Trojans. Plan B should be kept behind the counter in pharmacies. Before a woman is given emergency contraception she should be reminded of the risks of unprotected sex and emergency contraception by a licensed pharmacist. Women need to understand that Plan B is not a substitute for birth

control, nor is it even remotely intelligent to use often. But we have a right to use it — when we need it. I could step up on my soap box and say that the need for emergency contraception shows lack of responsibility. I'm sure that those people blessed with perfection think that emergency contraception is just an excuse to have wild sex all the time. But I disagree. If I made the mistake of unprotected sex I would want to take every measure possible to ensure that I prevented an unwanted pregnancy. And to take those measures, I have the right to get emergency contraception the moment I need it. I refuse to let one mistake dictate the course of my life, and I refuse to let anyone (because let's face it, no one is perfect) tell me I have to live with my mistake forever.

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

AROUND THE QUAD

What do you think when professors state their views about unrelated subjects in the classroom?

"I've never really had any professor do that."

*Reed Cope
Junior*

"I really don't mind — if they spent the whole period then it would be a little much, though."

*Joelle May
Junior*

"I think it spices things up."

*Katie Toler
Senior*

"It allows me to relate more personally to the professor."

*Dan Fister
Junior*

Merely meeting disability law minimums should not be goal



Kelsey Landhuis

Well, better late than never. The Missouri Hall renovations have made Truman much more accessible to people with disabilities. However, prior to their completion, if you were in a wheelchair, you were out of luck. As recently as last year, the University's campus was an accessibility nightmare. If you had mobility problems and you wanted to go, for example, anywhere, you would have had a hard time. The reason for this can be summed up in one word: stairs. They are everywhere, and as anyone who has ever used crutches or a wheelchair can tell you, they are extremely difficult or impossible to navigate. The worst culprits were Blanton, Nason and Brewer halls, where it was necessary to climb a flight of stairs just to get to the first floor. This will change with renovations, but other locations across campus remain problematic. Going to Ryle or Centennial Hall to get a bite to eat? Not without navigating a flight of stairs or two. How about the Student Union Building? Sure, you can get into the bottom floor without having to climb the stairs — by going

all the way around the building to the Franklin Street entrance. Obviously, this is not an ideal situation for people with mobility issues. A letter to the editor in the April 21, 2005 issue of the Index illustrates the University's accessibility woes. The letter describes the plight of a prospective student's parent, confined to a wheelchair because of multiple sclerosis, as she toured campus. It goes on to explain that the lack of accessibility led the prospective student, who showed early signs of MS and might someday need a wheelchair as well, to choose a different school. Two years and several renovations later, the University's efforts to increase accessibility are paying off. Students with disabilities are choosing to come here because of the degree of accessibility rather than in spite of it, and what once was a liability now is an asset. Amenities such as Pickler Memorial Library's Instructional Technology Lab, Ophelia Parrish's wheelchair-accessible backstage and Missouri Hall's brand-new wheelchair-friendly main entrance attest to the fact that the University has recognized the problem and is taking measures to correct it. Missouri Hall in general is extremely handicap accessible, in compliance with the standards set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act, and as the other residence halls undergo renovations, they will follow suit. However, as the construction plans for the remaining residence hall recon-

structions take shape, the University should not be satisfied with meeting the ADA's minimum requirements. All main doors should be equipped with automatic openers, and students with wheelchairs should not have to go hundreds of feet out of their way to get to the ramps that allow them to enter buildings. Dining halls should be designed to make those with mobility issues as self-sufficient as possible. The additional expense that these accommodations will generate is insignificant in comparison to the benefits for current students with disabilities, as well as for future generations. Some might argue that students with disabilities only constitute a small portion of the University's population and that making the extra effort to accommodate them is more trouble than it is worth. Even if those with disabilities were the only ones to benefit from greater accessibility, the University would be justified in using its resources to make life easier for a group that constantly encounters obstacles in society. Along with helping these students, additional handicap accommodations also would assist students on crutches, athletes with injuries and anyone who just has trouble getting around. The University is off to a good start in its efforts to increase accessibility, but it has a long way to go.

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

Homecoming ought to return to roots of bringing alumni home



Nathan Atkinson

Homecoming — a time when alumni can come back to their alma mater to relax, have fun and remember the good old days. Well, at least this is what I believe Homecoming should be. Truman's Homecoming, in my opinion, hardly serves this idea of Homecoming at all. I imagine a Homecoming designed for our alumni, one that encourages them to come back and, much to the University's delight, donate money. This would entail a weekend filled with events to keep the alumni busy and to entertain their families. Truman's Homecoming is a little different. We have a week full of campus organizations competing with one another to "win Homecoming." The week encompasses such events as an improv night, trivia contest and a scavenger hunt. The week culminates with one of two events, lip sync or the football game. Although lip sync might

be entertaining to me, it has very little, if anything, to do with alumni. Although the football game and the parade are possibly "family events," therefore a reason for many to come back and visit, Truman's Homecoming still is lacking. It lacks breadth because we offer only two major events that seem to be family-oriented and aimed at our alumni. Even the events we do have that target alumni probably are not enough reason to make an alumnus want to return to Truman. I personally do not care much about the Homecoming football game because in no way did Truman's athletics factor into my decision to attend Truman. The parade is a nice idea, but I don't really know for sure because I have never seen it. But far from canceling these events, Truman's Homecoming week activities should culminate in a wider variety of events during the weekend, when the alumni return. Homecoming teams should compete to entertain our alumni and their families rather than the student body alone. We should not have lip sync and other activities during the week before the alumni even get into town — we should have them on the weekend and actively invite alumni to come with their families. When I think of these potential

"family-oriented" events, I remember my childhood. When I was young, I attended Mizzou's Homecoming with my family. We walked around campus looking at all the house decks, which are elaborate lawn skits with complex, cartoonish sets put on by the fraternities and sororities. Events such as these are designed to entertain alumni first and students second. The football game and the Homecoming parade will continue to bring some people back to Truman, but they will not be sufficient to bring back many, including myself. Virtually none of my friends who have graduated came back so they could go to the game or the parade — they came back to visit friends. Maybe if Truman spent more time showing alumni they matter and making alumni stay interested by providing entertainment instead of simply asking for money, the University actually would get more loyal alumni. In the end, the main problem with Homecoming at Truman is its focus on entertaining students — not the coming home of Truman graduates. By doing so, it misses the point entirely.

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Propagandizing in classes is not proper pedagogy



Phil Jarrett

I have convictions. This makes opinion writing easy for me and teaching a nearly impossible career option. Beliefs, in general, can make the classroom much more exciting. Stupidly loud beliefs make the classroom unbearable. One cannot do a decent job of instructing when academics are set aside for the proliferation of an unrelated worldview. In short, it is unwise to confuse the lectern with a pulpit. As a journalist, one pretends to be a resident expert on virtually everything and still receives the benefit of doubt from readers. As a teacher, one actually gets to be an expert on a specialized subject, and students will vigorously dictate spoken word as gospel fact. There is a lot of power in both professions. There is a key difference between journalism and teaching, however. You can write me a nasty letter to the editor, and I will not lower your GPA. Perhaps we are quick to complain as students, dropping that age-old question time and time again: When are we ever going to use this? Sometimes we lack the scope to see how some material eventually will be relevant. Then there are times when a teacher's assignment simply has nothing to do with the course at all. Be it a personal tangent in class or a quirky bonus question on the final, unrelated material inevitably is going to make its way into the classroom. This stuff happens. Usually it is a good thing, putting a human face on our otherwise robotic instructors. Yet beyond eccentric fun facts and class periods lost to idle chit-chat, no university credit should be given to unrelated material, especially if the motivations of the professors are transparently selfish. Prime examples include staff other than philosophy and religion faculty offering extra credit to attend religious speakers that conveniently coincide with their brand of faith, or non-political science faculty giving extra credit if students attend a one-sided political event that happens to encapsulate that professor's voting habits.

Teachers can urge students to go to these events, and students can reserve the right to be freaked out by the invitation. Yet, again, no credit should be given for extracurricular participation not related to class. As a student who has found himself in classroom situations such as those aforementioned, I still think it is important to respect the authority of our teachers. However, this authority is not all-encompassing. In fact, as critically thinking students, it should not exceed the boundaries of an instructor's academic expertise. Ideally speaking, they were given a position of influence on account of respect for their know-how in their field. More importantly, they get paid to teach what they have proven themselves to know. Giving Truman credit hours based on anything other than course-related material is more than the University bargained for and certainly more than students are expecting when they sign up for a course. The University should take an active yet cautious stance in ending such behavior. If a student thinks an assignment or extra-credit opportunity is wholly unrelated to the class work and is being used as a means of persuasion or rewarding like-mindedness, he or she should be able to go to the department chair and submit an anonymous complaint. The teacher then would be called upon to defend his or her assignment with regard to how relevant it is to the class. If the defense is substantial, the assignment will stand with a re-statement of relevance. This policy will need to assume that students are thick-skinned. The last thing this campus needs is a means of censoring teachers in a way that prevents them from teaching their courses well. If a religion teacher assigns students to attend a religious service, while it might be uncomfortable, it still is a pertinent experience. The goal is to keep classrooms fair and on topic, not safe and watered down. We have an exciting faculty at Truman, including social and political activists and even ordained ministers. Most of them do a great job of separating work from their own personal biases while still maintaining an in-class personality. They thus contribute to a healthy learning environment on campus that encourages critical thought, rather than stifling it.

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WEB POLL

Should sororities continue to have mixers with Alpha Kappa Lambda?

No. (18% — 12 votes) Yes. (44% — 28 votes)

Who cares? (38% — 25 votes)

This week's question:
Should there be a Highway 63 bypass around Kirksville?

Vote online at www.trumanindex.com