

ONE-ON-ONE

This week, two of our columnists debate each other. Their topic for this issue is:

Should Democratic primary debates focus on Hillary?

Questions about Clinton detract from real issues

“Specifically, what are the issues where you, Senator Obama, and Senator Clinton have differed, where you think she has sounded or voted like a Republican?”

This was co-facilitator Brian Williams’ first question in the highly anticipated Democratic candidates’ debate last week.

Williams prefaced this question by claiming that Sen. Hillary Clinton was Sen. Barack Obama’s chief rival (completely ignoring the rest of the field even though they were standing on the same stage) and claiming that she was the “leader among Democrats so far.”

I always thought a debate, especially months before a primary election, was meant to be an open forum where candidates could answer questions about pertinent issues for voters to form opinions on which candidate they would vote for.

I turned on the debate expecting to hear all seven candidates’ opinions and plans for issues such as health care, gas prices and foreign policy.

Instead I was treated to questions from Tim Russert such as how Sen. Clinton’s vote for the Kyle-Lieberman Amendment was a “justification for war in Iran,” and responses from John Edwards like, “[Clinton] is moving from primary mode

to general election mode. Our responsibility as presidential candidates is to be in tell-the-truth mode all the time.”

Tell-the-truth mode? Right now we are facing issues the likes of which we have never known before as a country. Issues like global warming, pending war with Iran and our sinking economy should be at the forefront of the minds of the American people and, more importantly, the candidates for president.

Instead we get a debate about who sounds more like a Republican and who is focused more on telling America the truth instead of what that “truth” might be.

It seems to me that the election is becoming more like fantasy football than a process to choose our next president. The media and the candidates themselves tell us that we should be more concerned with matchups between various candidates than the actual issues. We cast our votes not based on who best represents us but rather on their chances of winning a certain state or the Democratic primary or defeating the “evil” Republican candidate once the candidate does switch over to “general election mode.”

My guess is that if you are reading this then you at least are somewhat interested in politics and probably have a candidate in mind to vote for,

but how many of you made that choice based on issues? How many of you can tell me where your candidate stands on gun control or education? Really, how many of you voted for John Kerry in 2004 simply because he wasn’t George W. Bush?

We are at a critical point in the history of our country and the history of the world. The next president of the United States will be forced to make important decisions that will affect our place in the global dichotomy.

Unlike leaders in the past, he or she will make decisions that will affect individuals in our country directly. Actions taken by our next president could mean life or death for some Americans.

I don’t know about you, but I would rather make this decision based on facts instead of personality and political affiliation. I would rather choose a candidate for his or her competence, rather than the ability to effectively denounce opponents.

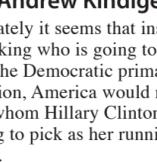
It’s time that we let the candidates know that the era of relying on political parties to get elected is over and that we demand to know how they will fix the problems we have inherited because of it.

Chris Waller is a senior English and communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.



Chris Waller

VS.



Andrew Kindiger

Lately it seems that instead of asking who is going to win the Democratic primary election, America would rather ask whom Hillary Clinton is going to pick as her running mate.

There is no denying the fact that Sen. Clinton is ahead in the polls. National Public Radio recently reported that Clinton leads in the Democratic polls by 2 percent, a modest but distinct advantage. Even though there is potential for individuals like Sen. Obama to challenge Clinton, she still seems to be the Democratic Party’s heir apparent. It might seem like the debates have become generalized and that more and more questions are geared toward what candidates have to say about Clinton’s platform.

However, instead of perceiving these generalizations as negative, it should be realized that they actually are going to be more beneficial both for Hillary and the other Democratic candidates.

Honestly, if you think about it, the big names in the news are strictly Clinton and Obama. Sure, Joe Biden pops up in Iowa, and Mike Gravel shouts in Democratic debates, but Clinton and Obama get more press — especially Obama.

Not only was Obama on the cover of GQ Magazine, but recently he also has become

Comparisons prove beneficial for all candidates

more intense in his campaign.

Other candidates need a distinguishing factor to be able to compete with the kind of press that Obama and Clinton receive simply in terms of popularity. Dennis Kucinich’s laundry list of military relatives or Chris Dodd’s hip grandfather persona are not going to carry them through the primaries. Even John Edwards is lost without John Kerry to toss around the old pigskin.

Showing contrast with the frontrunner will do nothing but help competing Democratic candidates. It will give the American public something on which to base its decision. It also will benefit Hillary greatly. Right now she is ahead, but some still question whether she will be able to lead our nation. To seal the election, Clinton needs to make her platform distinct from her competitors. She needs a boost just like the rest of the Democratic candidates, and a mechanism for direct clash will help her just as much as the others.

Hearing ideas rolling off tongues in rehearsed speeches is great for a while, but America needs more answers to make a clear decision when voting for the Democratic candidate. Right now, Clinton is ahead in the Democratic polls, and rightly so. She has experience, she appeals to

liberals and she might even snag some swing votes. Other candidates are getting lost in the popularity of both Clinton and Obama, so generalizations that promote direct clashes are beneficial and necessary. How are other candidates different from Hillary? America needs to know.

If you think about it, what does Clinton not have? She is a saucy and smart alternative to the current administration, a revolutionary, real-life Ally McBeal. She has firm stances on the war in Iraq and health care, and of course Slick Will is going to be there to support her all the way. Just thinking about all the shenanigans he’ll get into being the First Gentleman makes you want to vote Clinton in ’08.

The rag-tag gang of champions serving as Democratic Party candidates needs a push in the right direction for election. When it comes down to the wire, people are going to start asking more direct questions. Glossy descriptions of how Republicans are bad and negative feelings toward the war aren’t going to cut it anymore. People need to see some diversity, and it is going to start with how candidates differ from Hillary Clinton.

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

University should increase publicity of Truman Parents Council projects



Alex Hayden

Give credit where credit is due. I know it’s cliché, but I think this simple phrase describes an important fact of life.

When someone gives you or anyone else aid, it is only right to grant them some degree of recognition. The bigger the help, the bigger the recognition that is due. Of course, this is how things should happen.

Unfortunately, though, it seems to be a rarity in this day and age.

I, for one, am hoping to remedy such a situation that has occurred at Truman for years. When you see the words “Parents Council project,” what comes to mind? Chances are it is something along the lines of a group of parents who have decided to work on a project together. This might be an obvious answer, and it is indeed the case.

Here at Truman, there is a group of students’ parents who decide what they would like to see improved at the University. In the past, these parent councils have decided money should be raised to fund such projects as the Cyber Café in Magruder Hall, the renovation of Baldwin Auditorium, the LexisNexis

research engine and the computer labs in Violette Hall, the residence halls and Pickler Memorial Library. In the past decade, more than \$600,000 in resources has been gathered for Parents Council projects. Simply put, the Parents Council projects have helped to improve the quality of Truman in some critical areas.

And where do these Parents Council projects get most of their funding? Why, from our parents, of course. In addition to helping us, their children, in whatever ways they can, Truman also asks our parents whether they can go above and beyond to help other students at Truman as well. Some parents are able to give, others are not. In the end, though, the money is raised, and a new project is funded.

However, parents fund this project, and it stops there. For the majority of students, little is known about the great aid Truman parents provide. Apart from an article mentioned in the Oct. 25 issue of the Index about this year’s Baldwin Auditorium renovation, this year’s Parents Council project (along with previous years’ projects) has received few notes of praise.

It’s bad enough that most students do not know that the University asks their parents to go the extra mile and donate, but to have the University barely put forth the effort to have others recognize the aid is atrocious. More word about the Parents Council project must be circulated.

I don’t think I am asking too much when I say this, either. If more than half a million dollars has been collected from parents in

a 10-year time span, I think the University can at least send out a detailed e-mail about each year’s Parents Council project and post a display at the site of the project upon its completion (granted, some project sites have plaques commemorating them).

By informing students about how the University funds its projects, both the students and the University win. Because some parents are reluctant to give, the University turns to us to inform our parents about the Parents Council project. If we do not know about the project, it is unlikely that we will encourage our parents to give. If we do know about the project, however, chances increase that more aid will be given.

As such, Truman should be more proactive in its information dissemination about University projects, especially the Parents Council projects. Not only would Truman students be more informed about how the University spends its and our parents’ money, but also we would be more likely to support the University in its investments. In openly advertising the things which have been done with the money, Truman would be both promoting student-parent interactions and fostering students’ involvement in necessary fiscal programs on campus.

In the end, I can see nothing but good things coming from the two.

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

FAFSA drug offenses query reveals unequal standards, unfair system



Jackie Gonzalez

There are some things in life that just don’t make sense. We, as Americans, promote equal opportunity to all parts of the world, but when it comes down to our own higher education system, we make stupid decisions that, although they might seem minor, can be drastic for many young people.

The issue at hand is the infamous Question 31 on the FAFSA. Question 31 asks applicants if they ever have been “convicted for the possession or sale of illegal drugs.” If the applicant has been convicted, he or she must fill out a worksheet that still will not guarantee financial assistance. By answering these questions honestly, it almost will ensure that those with drug offenses will not be offered any money whatsoever. In 2001 more than 28,230 students were denied financial assistance because of their drug convictions, according to Gannett News Services.

For those who have committed these

offenses, there exists a two-year period of ineligibility for federal aid. For those dependent on this aid, getting buried in loans or taking a break from school are not the safest routes.

No financial support often means no more schooling for those who seek it. But since when is that a good thing? All this policy does is create a greater gap between the privileged and the deprived. Thirty-six percent of students now enrolled in four-year colleges who decide to take a break from school don’t return to obtain their degrees, according to the National Center for Education. Half of students at two-year institutions don’t return for their associate degrees.

The validity of the question also remains to be addressed. Why should one’s previous drug convictions serve as a deterrent to obtaining a higher education? If anything, those coming from backgrounds that led to drug use in the first place should be hurried to a classroom posthaste.

The most troubling issue is that, except having too much money to qualify, drugs are the only thing that can prevent students from receiving financial aid via the FAFSA. Penalizing those with drug convictions more than those with any other misdemeanor offense is absurd. Drugs — products that can potentially only harm the user — can prevent

someone from receiving aid for a college degree while crimes that harm others, like battery or rape, won’t. Don’t get me wrong — I am aware of the accidents that can happen to others because of drug use, but the point is that some crimes are directed intentionally to hurt other individuals, and those crimes aren’t asked about on the FAFSA.

If the government thinks it has sufficient justification for this type of question, it might as well provide a multitude of other questions. If the government wants to keep that question on the form, then every misdemeanor and every mistake ever made by a young adult should be documented and asked about as well.

Nonetheless, reprimanding individuals by removing opportunities for educational advancement still seems like a backward idea, even if full disclosure were required.

Prohibiting education for some based on past drug convictions is a blatant promotion of ignorance. If students can demonstrate need and meet FAFSA financial eligibility requirements, then they should receive government assistance. Period.

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

AROUND THE QUAD

Have you watched any of the presidential primary debates?

“Yeah, I’ve watched clips on YouTube and repeats on CNN.”

Kevin Richardson
Sophomore

“I haven’t had time, I’ve been so busy.”

Spencer Clark
Freshman

“No, I haven’t been following much this election year.”

Thomas Hughes
Sophomore

“No, I thought the primaries were in January.”

Sara Wissmann
Sophomore

WEB POLL

Should there be a Highway 63 bypass around Kirksville?

Response	Percentage	Number of Votes
Yes	64%	62
No	31%	32
Undecided	5%	5

This week’s question:
Is Truman’s campus wheelchair- and stroller-accessible enough?

Vote online at
www.trumanindex.com