

## ONE-ON-ONE

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



Harry Burson

Swept up in the excitement of moving away from home, meeting all kinds of new people, attending endless icebreakers and succumbing to Kirksville's many charms, it was easy to think I was away at summer camp rather than beginning my college career.

Truman Week was an enjoyable and valuable part of my time in Kirksville. However, it was not an accurate taste of what University life would be like once classes began.

It's obvious that the candy-coated activities are designed to do little more than ease you into campus living. No one expects to be shepherd around by a student adviser or compete in whimsical lip-synching contests until graduation, but some of the differences between Truman Week and the rest of the year are not so apparent.

First, there's the center of the week's schedule: the Truman Week class.

Like many students, I was apprehensive about starting classes but eager to see how difficult college would be compared to high school. Unfortunately, my Truman Week class was not a good indicator of normal coursework.

In my experience, and that of many of my friends, the Truman

## Short on reality, long on summer camp mentality

Week class was light on actual assignments and heavy on more of the same getting-to-know-you games. It mostly served the same function as the rest of the week's activities, providing a relaxed atmosphere in which students comfortably slip into their new roles as undergraduates.

Although the lax coursework does allow freshmen to spend more time socializing, it might be a disservice in the long run. The amount of work and time put into your Truman Week class hardly compares to the average workload of even the most basic classes. Keep in mind that with the start of actual classes in a week, you will very likely be spending much more time in the library — and not on scavenger hunts.

Academically, another important part of the week is Division Day. Meeting with teachers and fellow students from your major seems like a good idea but proves to be somewhat complicated. Nearly half of all undergraduates change their major in their first two years, according to Truman's First Year Experience Task Force. Also, many students like myself start school undecided, the most popular choice for incoming freshmen.

So although Division Day

is helpful to those who already know what they want to do, it is not a particularly helpful way for undeclared students to learn more about their options. This early in your college career it is important to remember that you don't have to decide what you want to do right this second.

And finally, there are all those people you will meet outside the classroom during Truman Week.

From talking to numerous people and from my own experience, I've learned how delicate the relationships built during Truman Week are. Entering my senior year, I rarely see the people I first met, having moved on to people with more similar interests. The impression of summer camp is accurate — these friendships might not last once you start school for real.

But that's hardly a bad thing. If you've met some great people, get ready to meet some more, and if you haven't, chances are you will soon enough. You will only meet more people and learn more things. There's a lot to look forward to, even without an accurate picture of college life during your first week here.

Harry Burson is a senior English major studying abroad in London at Imperial University



Charlotte Keenan

## Valuable for the community it builds among all

My friends can't agree. Truman Week was either essential to soothing pre-college jitters or a horrible, mind-numbing waste of time.

The reactions I've witnessed are wide-ranging and sometimes intensely emotional. I personally don't remember too much from that week other than endless icebreakers and dull lectures about the Liberal Studies Program. But the fact that we're still talking about it years later suggests to me that Truman Week actually accomplishes its purpose.

This purpose boils down to creating a more comfortable environment for incoming first-year students, the beginning of a community. The Residential College Program Web site touts Truman Week as "designed to help first-year students adjust to college life at Truman."

That seems pretty straightforward, but there's more.

The ultimate goals of Truman Week include, "transitioning to living on campus, meeting students, faculty and staff, and introducing students to the academic classroom," according to a May 2006 report by the First Year Experience Task Force. Truman Week also should promote, among other golden attributes, alcohol and sexual responsibility, diversity appreciation and school pride, ac-

ording to the report.

Fortunately, Truman Week seems to build community, its primary concern, around the other, less-feasible objectives of alcohol and sexual responsibility. I'm positive my peers and I didn't process and retain all the cautionary information about sex and drugs presented during the sketches we watched together in Baldwin Auditorium, but we all did react when Condom Man unexpectedly bounded on stage and showered us with handfuls of his namesake.

Some laughed harder than others, but even if we barely cracked a smile or rolled our eyes disapprovingly, a degree of bonding took place. It was a shared experience, and in experience we tend to make our strongest connections.

That's why I'm reluctant to dismiss Truman Week.

Yes, incoming first-year students are thrown together and compelled to endure getting-to-know-you games galore and a non-stop stream of LSP talk. Yes, they may not remember a word of any advice they receive from earnest advisers and professors.

Yes, first-years probably still will feel some apprehension about their first day of classes — this case of the nerves is incurable, no matter how mild.

But now at least they have

**At least now they have a connection with their fellow first-years, something they've all experienced together.**

a connection with their fellow first-years, something they know they've all experienced together. It's really quite remarkable. Truman Week is a basic experience common to every student.

This connection can be the basis for the beginning of a conversation and, in turn, a relationship, the start of that away-from-home family we all need.

And that's the important stuff. As for all those sessions explaining credit requirements and the registration process — all those informational meetings we slept through — for that, we have the Internet.

Knowing how to switch majors and the ins and outs of the LSP is helpful, but what Truman Week is really about, what we'll remember years from now, is the community it encouraged and shaped.

Charlotte Keenan is a junior Communication major studying abroad in Spain at International College of Seville

# College yields opportunities for solo decision-making



Chris Waller

I'm sure many of you who are reading this paper for the first time are thinking the same thing.

I can't wait until my parents leave. But after you carefully place this paper in your bathroom as the first piece of reading material, you will come to a sad and depressing realization. Then, once again, you will all be thinking the same thing.

I wish my parents would come back. Coming to college provides a very euphoric feeling when you realize that for the first time in your life you are on your own and responsible for making your own decisions. However, it also provides horrific fear when you realize after making a bad decision that you no longer have the safety net your parents and hometown once provided.

The unfortunate truth is that, unlike high school where you could live a naive and carefree existence, here at college you can and will be held responsible for

**Pull up your pants, go outside and explore your new home.**

everything you do. In the next four — maybe five — years you will be faced with tough decisions in every area of your life that will shape how the rest will turn out.

I know it sounds scary, but you should know this now on your first day of your college career, instead of three or four years down the road when you already have made mistakes that you might regret. But don't become depressed. With the bad comes the good.

Even though you will be held responsible for all of your actions, this doesn't necessarily mean that this responsibility will be a bad thing. Don't be afraid to accept this newfound power. In fact, you should treat it more like an authority than a responsibility. Yes, you will probably make some mistakes, but considering you've worked hard enough to get to this University, for every mistake you make you also will make a profound breakthrough.

The best part is that for the first time in your life you can take all of the credit for it, as long as you have the guts to say,

"I'm in control of my own actions and will accept the consequences of them."

This is no longer borrowed time. This is your time. You have done all the work and have made the choice to come to this University. Once your parents leave and you are stuck here in a foreign place with people you've never met, you should be proud, not scared. You should be empowered, not taken aback. The only person that can screw things up for you now, is you.

I would be lying if I said your time here will be easy. It will most likely be the most challenging period in your life. But without great challenges, we cannot have true progress. Without putting yourself in danger, you can never really gain anything.

So now my advice to you is this: Put down this paper. Pull up your pants, go outside and explore your new home. Talk to people, make friends and have intelligent conversations. Go out and don't be afraid to make decisions when they present themselves, just be aware that good or bad, you will be responsible for the choices you make.

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

# Benefits of attending Truman outweigh anxieties of college life



Jackie Gonzalez

Congratulations on making the excellent decision to come to Truman. Clearly you're craving to be challenged, and I admire your wisdom and drive — it's refreshing.

Then again, I know some of you are not enthused to be here. But don't expect my sympathies. All I can say is this: Get over it.

So maybe it wasn't your first choice. Maybe you decided to come because it's cheap, or maybe your parents put you up to it. Whatever the case, you're here.

OK, I am not as insensitive as this may read. Yet there's no point in complaining, especially because I happen to love it here. I left the West Coast and decided to venture out to the Midwest on my own free will. Coming to Truman was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

I bet you're nervous about Truman Week. Don't sweat it. If you think your Truman Week class is hard, well, I'm not going to lie — Truman is hard.

Freshman year is difficult, period. It is a whirlwind of newfound freedom and academic rigor, which somehow accumulates to become an indescribable sense of camaraderie among your Truman Week classmates and residential living mates. You'll experience a rollercoaster of emotions, deal with an assortment of challenges and develop life-changing relationships with a variety of people.

Being forced to live in a residence hall also is surprisingly beneficial. Living in a room on your own terms gives you a sense of freedom unlike any other. But be forewarned: It also can bring out the best and worst of anyone. Be wary and be kind. For, if anything, the experience at least will give you some clever anecdotes to entertain your friends.

The least I can say is be smart. This brand-spanking-new freedom might lead to some risky behavior. My freshman year was no exception.

For the first time in my life I got a D on an exam, I skipped a class for no reason whatsoever and completed assign-

ments at the last possible second. I pulled an all-nighter, fell victim to the Freshman 15 and attended more college parties than I should've.

Think again before you start judging me. Although the aforementioned bits might seem bad, it's completely normal. Completely. So don't worry if you bomb your first test or stay up too late, just don't make it a habit.

I earned As in many classes, gained an actual passion for particular academic subjects and developed meaningful relationships with my professors.

I traveled to places I had never been before, met people that truly inspired me and even experienced that crazy little thing called "love."

Sure, the expectations here are ridiculously high, and the town is a little bland, but the Truman experience is something you'll come to appreciate with time if you don't already.

Believe it or not, you've got an exciting future ahead of you. The benefits of the Truman experience are immeasurable if you develop a bit of self-control.

Jackie Gonzalez is a junior Communication and History major from San Diego, Calif.

## Around the Quad

**This week's question:**  
"What was the biggest difference between high school and college?"



Joon Jung  
Incoming Freshman

**"The teachers are different — they're all doctors, and they can teach me, not like high school where the teachers only had bachelor's degrees and it would take two weeks to get an answer to a question!"**



Jenny Lamb  
Graduate Student

**"At home, my refrigerator was magically filled with food, and today I opened it and it was just full of condiments."**



Graeme Allen  
Senior

**"Freedom."**



Larisa Kindell  
KCOM Student

**"The biggest difference was the diversity of people I encountered. There were a lot of people from different backgrounds with different ideas."**

## INDEX

**Do you think Residence Life/your landlord is attentive to necessary maintenance?**

### May 15 Results

43% (22)  
No, they often ignore maintenance until a serious situation develops.

39% (20)  
Sometimes they let things slide until I request their help.

18% (9)  
Yes, they fix issues before they become problems.