

# ONE-ON-ONE

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

# Should Truman require drug tests for institutional jobs?



Zach Vicars

## Tests are costly, disrespectful to student workers

My grandfather got his first job by hopping in the back of a flat-bed truck and riding out to a cotton field. He then spent all day filling up his burlap sack — sometimes with as much as 300 pounds of cotton. He did honest work, and he made honest money. He didn't have to fill out a lengthy application, he didn't have to file a W-2 form and he certainly didn't have to pee in a cup.

Since my grandpa's time, much has changed, but I'm glad this university respects its employees' right to pee in private. For more than 140 years, this institution has made the right choice by forgoing drug testing employees, and it should continue to do so.

Sure, there are benefits to a drug testing system. It's an almost foolproof way to maintain a workforce of drug-free personnel. It also keeps junkies on the streets, where they can't work their way out of destitution. That way, everyone wins.

The list of offenses that comes along with a drug testing system, however, is longer and much more egregious. Drug testing attacks the core values of work that have been in place since long before my grandfather's time, by increasing cost, removing trust and denying employees the respect they deserve.

The first problem with drug

testing — and perhaps the one that will interest students the most — is cost. You can hardly get free popcorn any more, much less free litmus strips, free plastic cups, free trained personnel, free electronic machinery and all the other paraphernalia needed to run just one drug test. Indeed, according to OHS, Inc., a leading drug testing company, one urine test costs on average \$44.

The next time you go to pay tuition, would you really want to see at the bottom of the long list of fees, service charges and fines an extra line designated for drug testing expenses? A second concern associated with drug testing is the attitude it displays toward the tested. Assuming that at least one drug user works for the University — and I'd say that's a rather safe assumption — he or she would feel like a fox running from the hound as soon as the University established a drug testing system. The user would be forced to hide from testers — cheat on the tests, even — to keep his or her employment status. The University quickly would find that indictment is one of the worst forms of prevention.

Instead of offering counseling sessions to help employees with a genuine problem, a drug test simply would sweep the University clean of those pesky

addicts. The final, and by far most troubling, problem with drug testing is the stigma it creates in the workplace. In our free-market society, work rises above almost all other activities as the most noble and dignified of engagements. The biblical phrase, "He who shall not work, neither let him eat," has become the mantra of many households.

The American people, even those who wake up every morning dreading their jobs, have come to respect work. And frankly, there is nothing respectable about being forced to pee in a cup. Asking employees to perform such a task is insulting and altogether undignified. That's why I'm proud of the University for not testing its employees. The University is not willing to sacrifice the traditions associated with work — traditions like frugality, trust and respect — for some convenience like drug testing. Instead, the University holds its employees in high regard and chooses to honor their right to privacy. I don't know about you, but my self-made grandfather would applaud.

Zach Vicars is a freshman history and English major from St. Charles, Mo.



Jackie Gonzalez

## Drug testing would function as deterrent

In a world of budget cuts and hefty debts, our University is well-known as being exceptionally generous to its students via scholarships. And like most places of employment, a percentage of its revenue is given back to employees, including student workers. Yet where does this money go? For most, it goes to common college necessities such as gasoline, food or textbooks, but some others choose to use University money in a less productive way — to support drug habits.

Let's face it, there are many students on campus who use illegal substances or abuse medications. For most workplaces, a drug test is standard protocol. Whether it is completely at random or required for every individual, drug testing is a good way to discourage illegal drug involvement. Thus, Truman should administer drug tests to students receiving a paycheck from the University.

Students' involvement with drugs might not influence academic or on the job performance, but it is unsuitable for University funds to go toward the pursuit of an illegal high.

Some might argue the decision to administer drug tests for campus jobs would be in violation of the fourth amendment's protection against search and seizure without probable cause. And because this is a public university, I suppose Truman is denied the ability to conduct random drug tests as administrators see fit.

### It is unsuitable for University funds to go toward the pursuit of an illegal high.

So we are left with a tricky situation: It seems that it has to be either an all or nothing approach to these tests, which (if administered) would be costly and inconvenient.

Although drug tests can be expensive, the threat of a required test could serve as a deterrent from students' desire to apply for a campus job, or encourage them to clean up before applying. Safety also is a primary concern for many on campus. Some might argue that drugs only harm the individual who uses them, however, if students use drugs while on the job, they

could actually put many in danger. There always is the potential risk of employees harming others while under the influence. Imagine a distracted night monitor allowing potential predators inside residence halls or a hypocritical student adviser who serves as a bad example to his or her residents.

In order to grant employment, the University might consider documentation of a recent physical exam as part of the hiring process. Physical exams often include drug tests, and this would help Truman avoid paying for costly drug tests while increasing the number of drug-free employees.

Of course, this would not prevent students from buying alcohol or any other items that are also harmful to their health (like a Big Mac), but the focus here is on what is legal and what is not. In order to use and distribute University funds in the most appropriate manner, the administering of drug tests might serve as a possible option.

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

# Rock the Vote fails to promote importance of informed voting



Caitlin Dean

Rock the Vote wants to register two million young people to vote in the November election.

This would be great, except that Rock the Vote won't be doing anything to encourage the education of its newly registered voters. Instead, almost all the information these young people base their votes on will come from opponent-bashing television commercials and "The Daily Show."

According to rockthevote.com, the organization's mission "is to engage and build the political power of young people in order to achieve progressive change in our country." Rock the Vote promotes making youth voices heard on the issues that affect them, and I applaud that. But that's really as far as it goes. The organization excels at driving youths to the polls while falling short of actually educating its targeted demographic.

Rockthevote.com has plenty of information: program goals for 2008, an "About Rock the Vote" section, links to data on youth voters, a history of the organization and a list of issues to consider when voting. But the site doesn't tell you where major candidates stand on those issues or what kinds of potential legislation voters will have input on. And it doesn't tell you where you can research any of this, nor does it even acknowledge that you should take the time to do so.

While I was at the Democratic National Convention in Denver on Monday night, I found five girls handing out information about Rock the Vote. I asked what steps the organization takes to educate voters, or at least to encourage them to do their own research on issues and candidates. The girls couldn't answer me. Instead, they talked in circles about the importance of making our voices heard. They told me Rock the Vote is a bipartisan organization and about how rough the terrain becomes when you start trying to educate voters from that position.

Truth: They were high school students keenly advocating a

cause. One of them said she couldn't even vote in this election. I probably should have gone a little easier on them, but I pushed them to consider what Rock the Vote leaves out, and I hope they take that to heart. Maybe instead of just pressing brochures on pedestrians outside Foot Locker, they'll tell people to research what will appear on the ballot.

During the summer, I interned with three radio stations in Kansas City that support Rock the Vote. I recently mentioned to my internship supervisor how upset I was about the lack of information the program offers. She told me she'd spent an entire day trying to learn what issues will be on the ballot in November, and it was almost impossible to find anything about them. The closest she came to a complete list of what Mission, Kan., voters will see in November was a copy of the 2004 ballot.

Democracy isn't easy. Apparently being an educated voter takes some real work on

### Don't belittle my vote by basing yours on sexiness.

the voter's part. But if we're given a say in who leads us and makes decisions that will affect us, by all means we should take advantage of that. I don't know yet how I will vote in a little more than two months, but I hope our next president is elected because the majority of voters thinks he will best serve the United States of America. Sure, Obama is really, really ridiculously good-looking, but where does he stand on the issues that matter to you? Don't belittle my vote by basing yours on sexiness.

Voters who want to do research have some work ahead of them. The information we need is buried deep in less-than-trustworthy Wikipedia articles and biased news stories, or else behind six levels of jersey-barricades and the Secret Service at the national conventions. The extra effort it takes to uncover the facts will pay off when you go to the polls in November.

By the way, if you want to vote based on what Jon Stewart tells you, I might not be as disappointed as you'd think — at least he's making decently reliable information available to the public.

Caitlin Dean is a senior English major from Liberty, Mo.

### AROUND THE QUAD



**"Do my school work — that would probably be my No. 1 goal."**

*Bradley Davis*  
junior



**"Go to every class the first week."**

*Bama Truitt*  
junior



**"Become better at foreign languages."**

*Emily Kohne*  
sophomore



**"I don't set goals."**

*Adam Roberts*  
freshman

Do you have any goals for this semester?

# Party conventions should keep focus on business, not pleasure



Brenna McDermott

Because the Democratic National Convention has been on TV for the past few days, I've been thinking about the whole point of party conventions, whether Republican or Democrat. Ever since I can remember, the party conventions have seemed like just a party. A writer for the Los Angeles Times stated Wed. Aug. 18 that "the conventions essentially have become huge — and hugely expensive — pep rallies for party activists."

The conventions were intended to be events at which parties would officially nominate their presidential and vice-presidential candidates and develop their party platforms. Overall, the conventions are meant to unify the parties and their members.

That doesn't mean the leaders of our country should be seen on TV dancing around at the political equivalent of a homecoming party.

I realize that people all need to let their hair down now and then, even politicians, but the Democratic National Convention (at least the part

broadcast to the public) shouldn't be a social event. It should fulfill the goals of the convention in a dignified way. I don't care how fun my representatives in Washington, D.C. seem. I don't care if they can shake their groove things to annoyingly upbeat music. None of this makes them good leaders to me.

The way I see it, business and pleasure always should be kept separate. When I am at work, I act professionally. When a fellow employee has a party, the boss is not invited. That would change our relationship from a working one to a weird, awkward one. A politician's job is to work for the people he or she represents, whether on a national or state level. So anytime politicians are out in public, or on national television, they should keep up appearances. This doesn't mean they have to be lifeless — it's just that I don't want to see people who essentially work for me hanging out with their buddies.

I really just want to hear the speeches and know the platform. I understand that there has to be a time and place to unify the party, hopefully resulting in winning the presidency, but combining the business of the convention and what should be an after-party into one nationally televised broadcast isn't a smart way to show the Democratic or Republican party's commitment. Seeing all the

expensive big screens and the fancy decorations and knowing about the luxury cars and gourmet food that is provided for the delegates doesn't make me want to support a party or candidate more. It just makes me wonder what political parties expect to gain through the hybrid of work and play that conventions have become. It can't be respect, because the conventions end up looking like concerts or circuses, rather than critical events for the parties in an election year.

Party conventions should be kept tasteful. Private lives and social lives are essential for all politicians who wish to maintain their sanity while dedicating their public life to their constituents. I'm glad that Democrats and Republicans have a celebration for their party and their presidential nominee and that the public can be exposed to the parties' platforms, but they should be kept separate. The most important thing about these conventions is hearing the parties' stances on our nations issues, not seeing our country's leaders cut a rug on the floor. After all, who really wants to see Hillary dancing in those pantsuits?

Brenna McDermott is a sophomore English and political science major from St. Louis, Mo.

### WEB POLL

Do you agree with Gov. Blunt's veto of students' Board of Curators voting rights?

Yes — 45%

No — 32%

Don't know/no opinion — 23%

**This week's question:**

**Does Truman's alcohol policy need revision?**

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