

## OUR VIEW

### School rankings can be valuable tools

Americans love lists. At the end of each year, we are bombarded with top 10 movie, TV show and book lists. Not to be too metaphysical, but the sense of order a list instills in its reader is wonderfully refreshing — by ranking movies, books, cars and refrigerators, the consumer can cut through the fluff and make an at least semi-informed choice about what to buy, eat and watch.

Perhaps the reason Americans love lists so much is that we love competition. Be it competitors on a reality show, people who play the lottery every day or students applying for an increasingly small pool of internships and scholarships, we are all trained to succeed. And how do we know what to compete for? We look at our handy compiled lists.

In this atmosphere of competition and list-making, it hardly is surprising that our nation's colleges and universities are ranked. For consumers shelling out \$100,000 for an undergraduate degree, one hardly can blame concerned parents and overwhelmed high school students for consulting U.S. News and World Report's yearly list put out to help high school students narrow down what universities they will be applying to.

The Truman community loves the rankings put out by U.S. News and World Report because our little ol' university always has done startlingly well. For the past 12 years, Truman has ranked number one in the Masters level category for public universities. In terms of good, old-fashioned PR, getting ranked high on the list gives you national attention — national attention our University sorely needs.

Just like the number of non-competitive t-ball leagues have increased in the past 10 years, so has the general antipathy towards the sense of competition generated by lists like the one put

out by U.S. News and World Report. Maybe Americans don't love competition as much as they once did? Well, actually it seems like our University presidents and professors are the ones who don't like the rankings very much.

According to Gary Rhoades, president of American Association of University Professors, universities have become too invested in status-seeking by chasing the highest rankings possible, all at the expense of their students. Instead of fostering a cooperative learning environment, universities are trying to outdo one another and recruit as many students as possible, with little to no attention paid to the learning environment students will be entering. In the open letter Rhoades addressed to President Obama, he called for schools to get back to the basics while the country tries to surmount its economic crisis.

Although Rhoades might have good intentions, we don't think there is anything wrong with a healthy amount of competition between universities. As long as universities are trying to make themselves the best they can be, what's wrong with a little competition? Especially for universities with a lower national profile, like our own University, being lauded on lists gives our image a much-needed boost. We would venture to guess a great deal of the current Truman student body came to the school because of the glowing report given by U.S. News and World Report.

By using factors such as student selectivity and academic reputation to measure a school's value, school ranking can give both students and schools a heads up to where they stand.

When it's all said and done, a little competition never hurt anyone. It gives the faculty, students and administrators something to aim for — even though the rankings are subjective. Watching non-competitive t-ball games never was much fun anyway.

## CORRECTIONS

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please e-mail [index@truman.edu](mailto:index@truman.edu), call us at 660-785-4449, or send a letter to Index, 1200 Barnett Hall, Truman State University, Kirksville, Mo. 63501.

## CARTOON

BY ERIN NEUMAN



### Letter to the Editor

#### Basketball team brings joy to couple's life

Words can't express our gratitude for honoring us for our 55 years of attendance of Bulldog men's basketball. We were very surprised and loved every minute of it. Thank you, Coach Schrader, the team, Kevin White and the athletic department for all of the nice gifts.

We have enjoyed seniors Patrick Fandja, Banks Estridge and Todd Kulage. We are going to miss them, just as we have missed many players over the last 55 years. We wish all of them the very best.

We can't forget our friend Roger Johnson, who put this together. He is one of a kind, and everything he did is greatly appreciated. We have seen good years and bad years. We

have watched many changes over the years: from KSTC to NMSU, and now to Truman. We have seen three coaches come and go: Boyd King, Willard Sims, and Jack Schrader as well as many great players. We have enjoyed every game, win or lose.

Andy and Anita Steele  
Kirksville residents

## INDEX

Serving the University community since 1909

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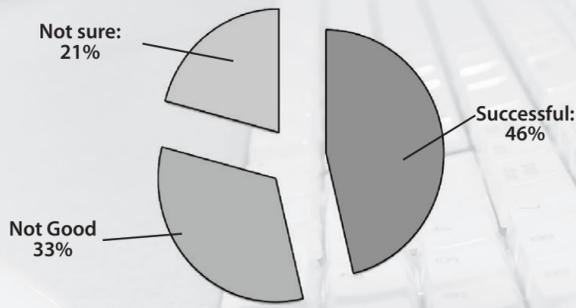
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## WEB POLL

How would you rate President Obama's first three weeks in office?



This week's question:

Do you think the Pershing repairs are the best use of MOHELA money?

Vote online at [trumanindex.com](http://trumanindex.com)

## NIU shooting anniversary serves as reminder for campus safety



Brenna McDermott

Sunday marked the one-year anniversary of the Northern Illinois University shooting. On Feb. 14, 2008, a gunman killed 5 students on NIU's campus. The anniversary reminded me about the tenuous state of our own campus safety. Between remembering the NIU tragedy and experiencing the emergency text messaging system, I've come to a somewhat obvious, but important conclusion — our student body is not invincible.

We all go through that stage when we do stupid stuff like drive too fast or abuse illegal substances. We take chances. We don't ever think the odds won't go our way.

The anniversary of the NIU tragedy reminds us once again of our mortality. It's sad that people have to die for us to remember this. I can't even imagine how all of our lives would change if a shooting happened at Truman. Any tragedy like a campus shooting could destroy our close knit, everybody-knows-your-name community.

This is why the emergency text messaging system, although imperfect, is a good reminder.

The test of the emergency text messaging system was obnoxious. I didn't enjoy getting three of the

exact same messages at three different times in one day. However, it is reassuring to know that there is a plan in place if something were to happen. Living in the 21st century means we can be warned instantaneously. Text messaging is the fastest way to reach someone in this day and age. Even while in class, there is always someone looking at their phone, who could see the warning.

The emergency text messaging system set in place is the best plan of spreading word of danger, though it is far from perfect. Some students received the message late or multiple times.

Although I would be shocked if I were to get a "this is not a drill" message, I would be relieved that there was a way for students to stay informed during a campus emergency.

When we are wrapped up with mid-terms and papers and our lives as college students, it always is hard to be prepared for a life or death situation.

No one can go through life worrying about what is going to happen if he or she is held at gunpoint. We have jobs and obligations and no one wants to spend all their time worrying about whether our school could be attacked. But we also cannot forget that sometimes bad things do happen — and we need to be prepared. We cannot forget campus

safety. Nor can we make compromises in our efforts to improve it. When the University decides on budget cuts, we cannot choose to sacrifice those people and technologies that help ensure our safety. We could argue that the chances of a gunman attacking Truman are slim, and that we should focus our money on things that actually affect and help students, but we would be incredibly naive if we did that. Thankfully, our school hasn't needed that kind of a warning the text messaging system provides.

The emergency text messaging system is a concrete way to prepare for the worst.

We need to move past the stage where we think all are Supermen. Truman

students all have a little worrywart in them that thinks about tests and grades and school in general, but we all need to make sure we worry a little bit about our own safety.

The emergency text messaging system is a good reminder of that. The NIU one-year mark should be a reminder to us all that bad things can happen. We cannot always avoid them. But maybe, just maybe, we can prevent another school shooting tragedy. We have the technology in place to protect ourselves, now we just have to realize that we are not invincible.

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

**A campus shooting would destroy our everybody-knows-your-name community.**