

International housing feud needlessly escalates



Jean Kaul

A couple of University organizations have gotten a little too big for their collective britches. Blink and you miss it — unless you are an especially observant member of our University campus community.

For the past two weeks, Student Senate and the Residence Hall Association — the programming and policy-making body for residence halls — have been involved in an increasingly bad-tempered tug of war about a

Senate-led resolution to allow students to stay in residence halls during week-long breaks like Midterm Break in the spring and Thanksgiving break in the fall. Inquiring minds want to know, why such a big hullabaloo over an issue that seems like somewhat of a no-brainer? Of course international students and students who just don't want to go home for the break should have an option to stay in the residence halls.

The answer isn't as simple as that, however. For students to stay in the residence halls there has to be residence hall staff to ensure the safety and security of the premises. And really, what student advisers want to stay during Midterm Break to spend quality time here in K-ville when they could be heading to sunny Florida instead?

Unfortunately the real bone of contention in the RHA and Student Senate

debate is not the plight of displaced international students. The real motivation behind the debate that engulfed the RHA meeting Feb. 5 for a solid 45 minutes was power. After a series of rejections, changes and overrides, right now the issue stands at this point: Senate has passed the resolution that students be allowed to stay in the residence halls but it has no authority over Residence Life. After a couple weeks of posturing on both sides, the issue stands where it did at the beginning — the resolution is relatively vague, and there seems to be no signs of cooperation on the horizon.

As a Truman student and someone who is represented by Senate and was for two years represented by the RHA, I'm disappointed that an issue that could be solved with a little cooperation has descended into a debate that's

full of a lot of hot air. The inner squabbling of various campus organizations might not seem like a big deal to students outside of those organizations or students who won't be directly affected by the housing resolution, but I think it's important to keep in mind that next time, just maybe the issue RHA, Senate or any other campus organization is having a hard time dealing with might be an issue that matters to you. Then you might be concerned about how student organizations budget their time and energy.

The crux of the issue is how far and fast RHA and Senate have moved away from helping their fellow students to settling personal scores. The general student population of Truman needs to realize that holding accountable the organizations that aren't doing their jobs is one of our duties as

Truman students. Yes, duties. College organizations that really evoke the feelings and hopes of campus and do good work on our behalf are a privilege, not a right.

Although it is easy to bash both sides involved as being needlessly childish, that won't solve the issue. Let's laud students who are doing important work in both Senate and RHA, because let's face it, they don't receive too many props for the behind-the-scenes work both organizations do on our behalf. The great work these organizations can perform is overshadowed when squabbles like last week's occur.

Maybe it's time to stop the fighting and play nice. Only then can a viable solution to the student housing problem be found.

Jean Kaul is a senior English major from Marengo, Ill.

AROUND THE QUAD

What entertainer do you wish would come to Truman?



"Toby Mac — he's kind of urban, he's a Christian rapper."

Amber Nelson junior



"I have no idea. I can't think of anyone off the top of my head."

Megan McLaughlin senior



"Ayano Tsuji — she's a ukelele player and singer."

Lisa Holmes sophomore



"Definitely a band — like the The Shins or The Decemberists."

Dixie Griffin freshman

Internships need to survive cuts



Zach Vicars

The "budget conundrum" has been sparking conversation and filling newsprint for the past several weeks, but balancing a university budget can be compared to doing a little spring cleaning in the residence hall room.

For those of you who aren't familiar with spring cleaning, allow me to explain. There are three simple steps: 1) pull out everything that's been accumulating behind your couch over the last year, 2) form two piles: one for things you wish to keep, the other for things that have to go and 3) grab a large waste receptacle and start chucking. Although the University does have weightier decisions to make, the process of whittling down University expenses somewhat is that simple.

Members of the University community have been trying to refine the Truman experience for months, and I would argue that summer programs are a vital part of this campus and something that can't be tossed out of the proverbial residence hall room.

Summer programs, especially those related to a student's major, are important functions of a healthy college campus. These opportunities can help increase recruitment appeal, broaden the spectrum of undergraduate research and might even lead to

higher graduate placement.

Although the majority of Truman students might wish for nothing more than to spend three months far, far away from Kirksville, there still is a vocal minority who are bent on using Truman's resources year-round. For better or worse, I count myself among the latter. For this reason, a year ago Truman was a difficult choice for me. I saw internship opportunities at larger schools — like the University of Missouri-Columbia or University of Illinois — that I didn't see at Truman. Similarly, I noticed some smaller, more academically-centered schools that had a strong dedication to undergraduate research. At Truman, I've found that only a few opportunities are offered in the summer, and many of them — such as Students Together Educating Peers, a program for younger students interested in science and math — may be going by the wayside. If I were applying to colleges again and I saw Truman's failing summer programs, I would have a very difficult time packing my bags and heading to Kirksville.

Summer programs also are important because they allow Truman students to research in areas that interest them most. Regardless of the major — whether it's physics or philosophy and religion — any Truman student can find a topic of interest that simply cannot be studied in great detail while balancing a rigorous class load. Summer programs take away the burden of those extra classes and allow students to spend hours in the library or lab, developing hypotheses and drawing conclusions that simply can't be done during the course of an ordinary

semester. This individual achievement, of course, reflects positively on the University. If enough bright minds spent summers researching here at Truman, the University would have an even greater opportunity to distinguish itself among the academic community, but if those opportunities are taken from students in the name of commerce, some of the University's cache could disappear.

Summer programs are essential to the University because they often lead to a higher placement among graduating seniors. Every college or university loves to brag about how many of their graduating seniors go on to graduate school or immediately find a job related to their major. Truman is no exception. It's natural to assume that if students have experience working with their discipline outside the classroom, they will be more desirable to graduate schools or employers.

The advantage that the experienced candidate has over the other is clear. And universities that offer summer research programs have a similarly clear advantage above the rest. They have the ability to draw more talented students, they can improve their reputation by broadening their spectrum of undergraduate research and they will have a higher placement rate because of their well-qualified graduates. I hope that as campus officials begin their 'spring cleaning' they will keep these advantages in mind to ensure summer programs stay here at Truman.

Zach Vicars is a freshman physics major from St. Louis, Mo.

University liberal arts mission needs to be questioned



Megan Klco

Of all of the things I'm experiencing for the first time in France, my favorite is a liberal arts education.

Today, I sat at the edge of my seat through a three-hour group discussion of one drawing by Daumier. Students bursted to debate the meaning of a single pen stroke. We traced compositional diagonals on the projected image and brought in everything from geometry to the French Revolution. When our professor turned the slide backward in the projector, reversing the image, the group of 20 students let out a collective gasp. The drawing had transformed completely. I'm having a passionate love affair with learning, and Truman, it's been way too long.

I'm having a passionate love affair with learning and it's not at Truman.

According to Truman's mission statement, "The highest goals of a liberal arts education are to ignite the individual's curiosity about the natural and social universe and then aid him or her in developing the skills and personal resources to channel knowledge into productive, satisfying activity." Now, this isn't a column arguing for or against the Liberal Studies Program requirements or Modes of Inquiry. I'd like to rehash that tired debate as much as I'd like to sit hung over through a micro-economics lecture. LSPs and other PR rubbish aside, this elegant quote is the heart of the liberal arts. At least, it should be.

Making this statement ring true for Truman's program would require one last overhaul, and that is my recommendation: doing away completely with the idea that the goal of education is to convey information. I took an art history class at Truman in which we spent endless hours flipping through PowerPoint slides of paintings while the professor read, one by one, the title of each work. We received

mountains of information, but toward the end of the semester, one student sitting next to me actually pleaded under her breath, "Teach us something!"

Teaching with the sole goal of conveying information can only fall short of encouraging any kind of critical thinking, let alone, "igniting the individual's curiosity about the natural and social universe." Both the teacher and the student's relationship with the information must go further. My assignments in France send me out into the streets of Aix to identify and study examples of architectural design. To understand Cezanne in art history we've read everything from Balzac to Plato. It is a detriment to students that connecting our classwork to other disciplines and to the natural and social universe seems to be reserved only for JINS. This should be what separates Truman from other university educations in every single classroom.

Truman, I have tasted educational manna, and I refuse to go back to Wonder Bread. As a painting major, I'm only required to attend painting classes for

the occasional (about twice-monthly) critique, making my major no more than a glorified form of independent study. I am not sharing these examples to whine about the shortcomings of individual professors. I recognize that teaching is immensely challenging and that some classes will always be more successful than others. I am sharing these examples because as a Truman student I am begging to be engaged beyond the recitation and memorization of facts. I am begging to be taught.

At this point of transition for the University, I challenge students and faculty alike to question what a liberal arts education means and whether or not we're achieving it. If we graduate as students with heads full of formulas, titles, dates and theories without cultivating the power to put this information to use, education has failed. Students, you are paying to attend Truman to have your great minds put to work. Don't settle for anything less.

Megan Klco is a senior painting major from Liberty, Mo.

Program offers creative outlet



Andrew Kindiger

As Truman looks to address academic disciplines in the coming years, the English department is thinking about making a few changes of its own by introducing a major for creative writers.

Introducing the Bachelor in Fine Arts Creative Writing program would be an excellent opportunity for English majors who are passionate about creative writing to focus their energy on a program better structured to meet their needs. The English major offers an emphasis in composition, but the new BFA program would better consolidate the objectives of degree seeking students so they could be exposed to a variety of literature as well as opportunities to write. From my perspective as an English major, there seems to be a gap between creative writing and literature — some separation would not only be appreciated but necessary in terms of garnering a better understanding of the writer's craft.

The program is outlined as follows: six hours of an intermediate foreign

language, the introduction to creative writing course, two sections of introduction to literary genres, three writing workshop courses, three 300-level literature classes, one to three elective hours in upper level English courses and the English senior seminar in creative writing. To continue in the program students must receive at least a B in the introductory creative writing course. The structure of the program will help students hone their creative writing abilities while simultaneously exposing them to literary concepts that will enrich their writing abilities.

The introduction of a BFA Creative Writing program couldn't be more timely. In her April 6, 2008 New York Times article "Let Computers Compute. It's the Age of the Right Brain," Janet Rae-Dupree claims that the Masters in Fine Arts is the new Masters in Business Arts. Rae-Dupree's article asserts that companies are looking more toward employing creative thinkers for positions that require a degree of ingenuity. Especially during a time when the economy increasingly is dependent on new creative business strategies, companies might start thinking more about investing in ways to change their business, as opposed to employing individuals who are ready to be handed a playbook and get right to work.

So for those worried about the practical applications of a Bachelor in

Fine Arts, let your worries be diverted. Many future employers as well as professional programs would encourage a degree that leans toward creativity. But worrying about a job should not be the primary focus of anyone's college career.

Giving students the opportunity to become passionate about creative writing earlier in their college careers will also present the opportunity to enter a masters program in creative writing. For example, the Iowa Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa is a competitive program that examines submitted student portfolios critically. The proposed BFA program would allow students to be aware of what should be included in their portfolio to showcase their skills. The mindset is almost more important than the program itself because students as well as teachers will be looking in every class to see how the creative process can be benefited by student thoughts as well as the literature being explored.

Offering the BFA Creative Writing program asserts to the academic community that there is room for creative thought in the modern world. Creativity is for those wanting to explore the true nature of their minds in an environment conducive to exploration.

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

What was going on in the INDEX?

27 years ago – Feb. 18, 1982

Student Senate raised emergency funds to help pay loans and school expenses students couldn't afford.

10 years ago – Feb. 18, 1999

Kirksville City Council debated adding a city charter that would allow the city to become more independent from the state legislature.

3 years ago – Feb. 16, 2006

Kirksville College of Medicine (now A.T. Still University) purchased 100 acres of land to expand its campus and develop a senior center.