

## OUR VIEW

## Curriculum feedback can be constructive

Maybe there's no gentle way to say this. It's time for the Truman community to put up or shut up when it comes to the issues students and faculty have with the University's curriculum. After years of hearing gripe after gripe about Truman's liberal studies program, the Curriculum Commission's findings might seem surprising.

According to the results of a survey administered to students earlier this academic year, 48 percent of respondents were more interested in tweaking LSP requirements rather than making radical changes although the respondents did want to shelve some parts, like the portfolio. So maybe things aren't really that bad when it comes right down to it, eh? Although students are painted as the ones who really dislike the LSP and its Interconnecting Perspectives and Modes of Inquiry, according to survey results, faculty were more open to changing the curriculum than students.

Now we have to decide what the results of the survey really mean. It's interesting to analyze whether these results are symptoms of a student body that complains a lot but doesn't have viable solutions to offer and doesn't like to fill out e-mail surveys, or if students really are happy with the liberal studies mission — either way the LSP is here to stay.

For all those who do have problems with the way the school's curriculum takes shape, take heart in the fact that your teachers are identifying and trying to correct some of the minor annoyances that weigh down a liberal sciences mission that could be much more streamlined. Many students think Modes of Inquiry are redundant. For example, why is it necessary for English majors to take a 200 level literature class to fulfill an LSP requirement, when they already are taking

several 300 level literature classes? Overwhelmingly, students are going to get more bang for their buck by taking 300 level credit — taking the lower-level class basically is asking students to perform busy work, and we think it's unlikely students want to take on more redundant work. The English faculty already corrected this particular flaw at its recent department meeting, allowing 300 and 400 level English classes to count for the LSP aesthetic: literature mode requirement. We look forward to similar tweaks that will make students' lives a little easier.

Other troublesome parts of the curriculum are being taken into account. The portfolio, the bane of graduating Truman students, is particularly frustrating. You submit your portfolio — often scrambling to put it together — and then you graduate. Students don't receive any feedback on what the portfolio committee thought about their projects, which seems pretty unfair. What's the point of doing work if you aren't going to get any results from it? We're fairly sure seniors aren't going to assemble their portfolios for the fun of it. Luckily, students made their dissatisfaction with the present state of the portfolio loud and clear on the survey, we hope the commission will take this into account and make changes to the system, and actually offer commentary on students' portfolios.

The commission also has a responsibility — a responsibility to use the feedback students give. If this doesn't happen, students will become apathetic about the curriculum, and the pointless grumbling will continue. The results provided by the survey need to be taken into account so changes that will most help our curriculum can happen.

If faculty and students can come together when facing budget cuts, why not come together right now and improve our curriculum?

## 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.

- A cutline on page 15 of the Feb. 19 issue of the Index incorrectly identified senior Lindsay Blair as the No. 2 singles player for women's tennis. Blair is the No. 1 singles player.
- In a story on page 19 of the Feb. 19 issue of the Index, freshman softball firstbasemen Mary Manley was incorrectly identified as Katie Manly.
- In a story on page 15 of the Feb. 19 issue of the Index, it was listed that six women swimmers qualified for nationals when in reality seven women qualified, making the total of Truman women qualifiers 16.

## CARTOON

BY ERIN NEUMAN



## Letters to the Editor

## Liberal arts mission needs personal definition

I am writing in response to Megan Klco's column regarding Truman's liberal arts mission in the Feb. 19 issue of the Index.

Although I certainly acknowledge that many students, including myself, experience moments of frustration with Truman's liberal arts mission, I find that Klco's argument is flawed in its reasoning. The experience she cites of studying at an art institute cannot be compared to the experience of studying at a liberal arts institution. The two types of higher learning are rooted in differing — and often opposing — philosophies. The experience of a "three-hour group discussion of one drawing by Daumier" is an example she gives of the benefits of specialized institutions of education — the antithesis of the liberal arts tradition.

If Truman were a business school or an art institute like the Marchutz School of Art in France, our curriculum and faculty would reflect a mission of education that seeks in-depth learning within a single discipline. Study outside of the specified discipline would exist on the periphery and only could function as a means to an end, much like Klco's example of reading Plato to understand Cezanne. Plato cannot — within the University's mission — be taught for the sole sake of teaching Plato.

My advice to anyone identifying with Klco's frustration: get on your horse and do it. If you blaze your own trail of intellectual inquiry, you will find that the University community has your back. I am an art and English major, and instead of spending a semester at the Art Institute of Florence, I applied to Truman's Missouri Government Internship program and worked for a local legislator in Jefferson City. I have written papers applying Greenbergian theory of avant-garde art to the legislative accomplishments of a freshman senator. I have explored marriage conventions of 18th century Britain through the writings of Samuel Richardson and the art of Hogarth.

Currently, I am writing my senior thesis in English on Dickens and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of early Modern Art. This litany of accomplishments is not a testament of my academic achievements but rather a testament to the fact that I do not think I could have

done these things at most other schools, especially in Missouri.

Through my career at Truman exploring different modes of inquiry, I have found all the professors who I have come in contact with not only willing to allow me to incorporate and explore ideas from outside their respective disciplines, but also encouraging me to do so. Truman offers a liberal arts learning environment, and reaping the benefits is up to each student. Put your mind to work.

James Lang  
Senior

## Amnesty International debate needs coverage

I reluctantly accept that the Index's costs and limited resources mean that it cannot afford to cover every non-sporting event in the Kirksville area. However, I have a hard time understanding the complete lack of coverage given to the Amnesty International-sponsored Middle East crisis meeting presented to a packed house in the Student Union Building. The event was brilliantly organized, and Truman Today mentioned it.

The main speaker was Mark Appold, professor of philosophy and religion and local Lutheran pastor, who spoke on behalf of Americans for Peace. He is a 12-time visitor to the Middle East and has an unusual understanding of the tense situation in the area. The two presiding Amnesty officers allowed a fair debate from the engaged audience. Daniel Mandell, Hillel adviser and Native American history expert, also spoke in the debate. His response was that Israel has no alternative other than a security response to Arabs around and inside its disputed 1948 state creation.

I also was able to recount my past experiences as UK Labour Party Heritage and Action for Peace member. Why were you not there to report something of such importance and interest to a local audience?

Larry Iles  
Kirksville resident

## Students respond to cuts with collaborative efforts

The current budget challenges are daunting and responding to them is likely to result in some rather painful

choices. However, those challenges also have resulted in a very interesting and even refreshing development on our campus. Students now are playing a much more active role in our institution. During the last several weeks I have heard a student leader discuss what students might and might not be willing to do to assist with our budget problems. Another student spoke to me about "her new class" — a course she developed with funds from a new initiative from academic affairs. A group of students recently talked to the entire Truman administrative team about the plans they had for some new technology and a new category of classes that emphasized the use of certain technologies and pedagogies. A student leader led a training session in a new high-tech classroom. The faculty sat attentively and took notes as the student instructed them. The faculty politely clapped at the end of the session, which was very well done.

This represents a real change on our campus. I have always been impressed with the academic ability of Truman students, but I sometimes have thought the lessons they learned about how to become good students including carefully following the rules established by their teachers and not straying too far from the ideologies expressed in those classes reinforced the hegemonic dynamics present in most formal learning environments. But things are definitely changing. Students are finding their voice and are assuming a much more collaborative role at our institution. This is a most welcome development and will result in many improvements in what we do here and how we get those things done.

When students identify the forms of power and control in place in learning environments and make recommendations for changes to improve learning (perhaps even require them), we are well on the way to a stronger and more robust learning community. To the Truman students who are participating in this transformation, I say well done!

Sam Minner  
Dean of health science  
and education

## INDEX

Serving the University community since 1909

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## Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, and additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the editor in chief, managing editor, news editor, copy chief and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

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## What was going on in the

## INDEX?

9 years ago – Feb. 17, 2000

The National Science Foundation gave the University a grant of \$100,000 toward the purchase of a Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectrometer.

12 years ago – Feb. 20, 1997

Science Hall (now Magruder) was evacuated after two students fainted in the same class because of a possible gas leak.