

OUR VIEW

University budget fix is temporary relief

It almost seems too good to be true. Almost overnight Truman, and all other public universities in the state, went from crisis mode to incredulous after word got out that Gov. Jay Nixon is recommending a level budget for higher education in fiscal year 2010. Before this, students, faculty and staff were tightening their belts, battening down the hatches and preparing for the worst. But now it doesn't seem so drastic.

We hate to look a gift horse in the mouth, but where did that 15, 20 or 25 percent of the budget go? Did someone strike oil in Missouri and not tell us? In addition to Nixon's recommendation for level funding, Missouri public universities won't be allowed to raise tuition for the 2009-10 school year. It's almost like watching an infomercial: Call within the next 10 minutes, and get an extra set of Sham-Wows absolutely free. How is this possible?

But the University's not out of the financial woods yet. There are several ways Nixon's budget proposal could end up being too good to be true, and University officials, staff, faculty and students need to continue to plan ways to weather the economic storm.

We would like to point out that the budget proposal still is exactly that: a proposal. Nixon isn't Moses coming down from the mountain with the 10 Commandments. Nothing is written in stone. The Missouri General Assembly still has to approve the measure, like it has to approve any budget-related item. If the University is counting on Nixon's plan as its only saving grace and the proposal falls through, we all will be up a creek without a paddle.

Even if the proposal is passed, the University's financial future isn't guaranteed. "Level funding" doesn't necessarily mean the University will get the exact same amount of money this year as it got last year. If the economy doesn't improve by this time next

year, the state could withhold massive amounts of funds the University was counting on for fiscal year 2010, again leaving the entire University community in the middle of the crick, paddleless. Let's not also forget that this year's budget still has a more than \$300 million shortfall. One has to wonder when that might rear its ugly head.

We suggest that the University stock up on paddles, figuratively speaking. What the University needs are plans. When University officials put together budget impact predictions for 15, 20 and 25 percent cuts, everyone knew what to expect and could prepare to make the necessary adjustments. Students joined Facebook groups in support of Truman faculty and staff and seemed willing to pay a \$33-per-credit-hour fee in order to minimize the budget cut's effect. Faculty and staff members contributed to a scholarship fund to help lower-income students afford the fee.

Even though Nixon has proposed keeping funding level instead of recommending massive cuts, now is not the time to breathe a sigh of relief. We are reassured by Interim University President Darrell Krueger's response to this new proposal: "Some people will read [the proposal] as if it is all done, but no, we've got lots of work to do." The right attitude toward budget concerns is not to sit back, relax and wait for the state funding to roll in, but to continue to prepare for the worst.

So, here we sit with our fingers crossed. We likely won't figure out about the rest of Nixon's proposed budget and how other state departments like health care and transportation fared until Tuesday at the State of the State address. All we can do is say thank you Gov. Nixon, and that we're very intrigued — and maybe even a little nervous — to see how you managed to treat us so well.

CORRECTIONS

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please e-mail 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 MEGAN KLCO



Letter to the Editor

Students need to lead charge for budget reform

News of the looming budget crisis might not have come as a surprise to many students last week. Rumors have been trickling down to students from faculty and staff, who received an e-mail from Interim University President Darrell Krueger before Winter Break, but what the students are being asked to do might have come as a surprise. At the Jan. 8 meeting, "Truman's Response to the Budget Crisis," Krueger asked each level of the University, from departments to individual professors, to personally commit to doing more for Truman in this time of need. I would like to extend that invitation to students.

"How can I have any influence on this situation?" you might ask. Educate yourself about what we are facing. Passivity and nonchalance will not shield those who do not want to acknowledge the problem at

hand. Volunteer for the greater good of the University. Maybe this means something as simple as picking up that discarded bottle as you walk to class, or perhaps this entails joining a student group — it is remarkable how central and formative campus involvement is to the college experience. Stand up for Truman. Those lucky enough to have been on a night tour led by Missouri Hall Director Zac Burden will remember how the students of Northeast Missouri State Teachers College were undaunted by the burning of old Baldwin Hall, standing up (quite literally) for their school 85 years ago this month.

This is without a doubt the most trying of student responses. We will be asked to vote for a \$33 per credit hour fee. Though I would favor a flat fee for full-time students (as credit-based fees might discourage taking courses for personal enrichment, a tenet of a liberal arts education), I am resolute in my support of this course of action.

This is our time to stand boldly and face the most intimidating challenge to the University of our time. I would like to applaud Student Senate President Liz Esfeld for articulating student needs and concerns about facing this crisis and also commend Krueger for directly informing students about our University's situation. I strongly encourage the faculty, staff and administration to maintain an open discourse with the student body about our present quandary. United we form the rich community that enlivens our University.

Will Petry
Senior

Editor's Note: This letter was submitted prior to Gov. Jay Nixon's recommendation for level funding for higher education, which would eliminate the need for a student fee. See story, page 1.

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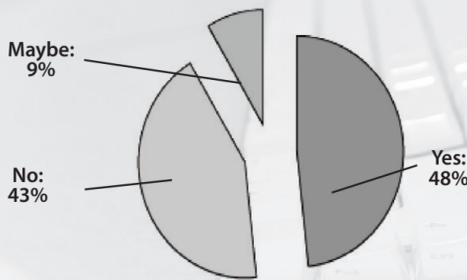
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WEB POLL

Are you planning to watch the Inauguration coverage?



This week's question:

How closely are you following the University's budget situation?

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What was going on in the

INDEX?

15 years ago – January 19, 1994

Plans for the Student Recreation Center became finalized after President Jack Magruder formed a committee to address the community's questions about the Recreation Center's future.

9 years ago – January 20, 2000

The University's social sororities ended their exploration of off-campus housing due to a lack of adequate funding.