

## OUR VIEW

### Portfolio requirement needs major overhaul

Everyone knows the saying, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

Of course, the unspoken second half of this adage would be, “If it is broke, do fix it — as soon as possible.”

Admittedly, it’s not as catchy, but it illustrates an important point about what the University is trying to achieve in re-evaluating the Liberal Studies Program curriculum. This week, the curriculum commission presented its suggestions for how to change the LSP in order to generate senior portfolios that are more useful to faculty and staff for improving their courses (see story, page 1). Although the LSP certainly has its shortcomings, we think the senior portfolio itself is what’s broken.

Currently, the portfolio is just another item on the seemingly endless list of graduation requirements. Students submit six writing samples or other projects that represent their “best work” in six areas, which could include critical thinking and writing, interdisciplinary thinking, scientific reasoning, historical analysis, aesthetic analysis and the highly academic “most personally satisfying.” In theory, it’s a decent idea — according to the portfolio section of the University Web site (under the heading “Why do we make you do this?”), “When they review portfolios, faculty can assess the nature and quality of the liberal arts and sciences experiences of graduating seniors.”

But in reality, students’ senior portfolios rarely represent their best work. The portfolios are reviewed anonymously, which means students aren’t rewarded for doing well or held accountable for slacking off. Many students submit writing samples from

advanced classes within their major, which only represent a narrow portion of their overall University education. As a result, portfolios are a poor indicator of the quality of students’ liberal arts and sciences experiences.

Here’s one way of fixing this: Make the portfolio an ongoing project throughout students’ four years (or more) at the University. Students would submit a writing sample or other project from a class they were currently enrolled in at the end of each semester.

As with the junior test, students would be unable to register for the next semester until they fulfilled this requirement. Students would not need to provide any explanation for the piece they chose to submit — with the current portfolio, they must describe “when, where, and why it was part of your learning and why you decided that it represented you” — the answers to these questions are evident within the submissions themselves.

Modifying the portfolio in this manner would provide a more complete picture of students’ growth in writing skill and in knowledge of various academic disciplines. It also would eliminate students’ frenzied rush to scrape together a portfolio in time for deadline and eliminate one of the many hoops they are forced to jump through prior to graduating.

Obviously, it’s too late to adapt the portfolio model for this year’s freshman class. However, there still is plenty of time to implement it next year. University officials already are evaluating the LSP, so they also should take a serious look at the methods used to evaluate students’ achievements within the liberal arts and sciences.

### Senior portfolios rarely represent students’ best work.

## 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 pull quote on page 2 of the Nov. 13 issue of the Index was misattributed. The quote should have been attributed to Kirksville resident Steve Salt.
- A cutline on page 20 of the Nov. 13 issue of the Index was incomplete. The cutline should have stated that Brandon Griffen and fellow transfer Brian Nwelue went to the same high school.
- Clarification: In a story on page 1 of the Nov. 13 issue of the Index, a source said money from the Student Athletic Fee is not going to club sports teams as promised. Athletic fee money never was to be allotted to club sports

## CARTOON

BY ERIN NEUMAN



## Letters to the Editor

### Kirksville music scene deserves more credit

In a review of a show in Columbia, Mo., in the Nov. 13 issue of the Index, Zoe Martin wrote that “Kirksville is not and probably never will be a live music Mecca.” Perhaps Martin is a bit too pessimistic. If you want to see bands that are at the height of their popularity, it’s usually best to be in a large city, but the best and ultimately the most influential music often has its roots in smaller towns (most bands from New York aren’t from New York). Because I’m involved in local music (and excited about it) I’ll leave it to others to judge the local scene, but I will say that time and again I’ve heard from alumni who live in bigger and supposedly hipper towns and miss the experience of seeing live music in our very hip city.

Royce Kallerud  
Professor of English

### Van Vleck clarifies recent election issues

In the Nov. 13 issue of the Index, Larry Iles once again made remarks regarding me and my campaign for state representative. I take exception to his characterization of me as “homophobic and anti-feminist.” I would challenge Mr. Iles to find a single advertisement that I paid for that substantiates his claims. Mr. Iles should know that Missouri law allows anyone to run ads for or against a candidate. If you want to know how a candidate stands on an issue, you should take a close look at who paid for the ad. If you then wonder why I didn’t repudiate the ads, ask why I never was granted interviews by anyone in the local media until days before the election. Media outlets make a lot of money during election season, and why should they grant free interviews when the candidate can pay for advertising?

Before Mr. Iles fires up his keyboard, I will admit freely that I support Christian values and I am pro-life. I was endorsed by Missouri Right to Life, the NRA, the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Missouri Farm

Bureau. If those organizations are homophobic and anti-feminist, then I guess I’m guilty as charged. That brings me to another issue that I would like to clear up.

I am a two-time Truman graduate (B.S. 1993 and M.A. 1998), and I am proud of my school and my accomplishments there. I stated repeatedly in interviews that I encouraged everyone, including students, to get out and vote. I think it’s great that a new generation will take ownership of our great nation. The issue of whether Truman students should be involved in local elections is of particular interest to me. If students study the candidates, look at what they will do for the area and learn about all the related issues, then by all means they should vote. But if students are not going to take the necessary time to understand the local issues then they should consider their motivations and whether their votes would be better served in their home area. Many students who voted will be gone in a couple of years, and the rest of us will have to live with their choices. Is that fair?

If you look at the results of the recent election, the farther you get from campus, the more conservative the voting became until finally, in Putnam County, you see me winning by a wide margin. This is generalized, and I encourage everyone to go to the Secretary of State Web site and draw their own conclusions. The point is, I’ve been a lifelong resident of this area, and there seems to be a deepening wedge between the school population and the local population. I would just ask that any student who wanted to get involved in local politics learn about the issues, be sensitive to the lifelong residents of the area and vote with knowledge and care.

Finally, I guess it is true that the victor gets to write the history books. I worked hard. I upheld my conservative values. I tried to run a good race, and I am, quite frankly, offended at some of the things said about me during the last two weeks of the election. Most of it was unwarranted and not true, but when you lose, few care. Those who know me are

aware of my values and where I stand. I’m happy I ran. It was overall a positive experience, and who knows, maybe I’ll try it again. Regardless of whether I do or whether someone else takes my place, please take the time to find out for yourself who would best serve the citizens of the area and the University and vote accordingly.

Thom Van Vleck  
Kirksville resident

### Adair County Humane Society needs assistance

I’m writing to bring attention to an organization in need: the Adair County Humane Society. The Humane Society is a non-profit organization. Its most visible purpose is to operate a shelter for “lost, strayed, neglected or abandoned animals” and to try to find those animals permanent homes. The City of Kirksville provides the group with the use of a piece of city land (west on Highway 6) and partially subsidizes the shelter. The remaining costs are covered by adoption fees and donations.

This past year has been financially challenging for many in this area. The shelter has taken in more owner-surrendered dogs and cats this year than any in recent memory. The staff at the shelter work incredibly hard to care for these animals, providing food, shelter, medical treatment and oftentimes transportation to rescue groups in nearby cities. This costs money. This has been a particularly expensive year for our local humane society. If you would like to help, please consider making a donation. Membership costs just \$5, and additional gifts are welcome. Checks can be sent to Adair County Humane Society, P.O. Box 481, Kirksville, MO 63501. You can pay a virtual visit to the shelter, view its current animal population and see its wish list at <http://www.petfinder.com/shelters/MO60.html>. Thank you for your generosity.

Bridget Thomas  
Member, Board of Directors  
Adair County Humane Society

## INDEX

Serving the University community since 1909

### Staff

<b>Editor in Chief</b> Julie Williams	<b>Managing Editor</b> Joe Barker	<b>Opinions Editor</b> Kelsey Landhuis
<b>Sports Editor</b> Blake Toppmeyer	<b>Features Editor</b> Alex Boles	<b>News Editor</b> Jessica Rapp
<b>Assistant Sports Editor</b> Jack Nicholl	<b>Assistant Features Editor</b> Zoe Martin	<b>Assistant News Editors</b> Caitlin Dean John Moenster
<b>Sports Staff</b> Joe Bell Krista Crider Brent Foster Arron Husted Logan Jackson Jocelyn Nebel	<b>Features Staff</b> Paul Bischoff Chris Boning Harry Burson Franklin K. R. Cline Tyler George Stephanie Hall Julia Hansen Jeremy Hellwig John Hitzel Michelle Martin Cassandra McCarty Kelly Schute	<b>News Staff</b> Amanda Goesser Blaise Hart-Semidt Andrea Hewitt Margaret Hooper Sarah Scott Jared Young
<b>Photo Editor</b> Brian O’Shaughnessy	<b>Design Chief</b> Antionette Bedessie	<b>Copy Chief</b> Megan Kloo
<b>Assistant Photo Editor</b> Mayank Dhungana	<b>Designers</b> Ryan Carothers Chris Drew Rose Runser Sarah Schneider	<b>Copy Editors</b> Lily Bicknell Chris Boning Whitney Fay Katie Huffman Jean Kaul Julie Pincus Kelly Schute Emily Ward
<b>Photographers</b> Krista Goodman Amy Gleaves	<b>Online Editor</b> Mike Solomon	<b>Adviser</b> Don Krause
<b>Cartoonist</b> Erin Neuman	<b>Business Manager</b> Olivia Crandall	<b>Advertising Manager</b> Ashley Hancock
<b>Assistant Advertising Manager</b> Katie May	<b>Advertising Staff</b> Kelley Hulse Katia Ivanova Kayla Jacobson Melanie Kenyon	<b>Distribution</b> Andrew Hamline Brenna McDermott

### Letters Policy

The Index welcomes letters to the editor from the University community. Letters to the editor are due by noon the Monday before publication and become property of the Index. Submissions are subject to editing, must contain a well-developed theme and cannot exceed 500 words except at the discretion of the Editorial Board. All letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced, signed by at least one individual and include a phone number for verification. The Index does not publish anonymous letters to the editor. Letters to the editor also may be submitted by e-mail at [index@truman.edu](mailto:index@truman.edu) or on our Web site at [www.trumanindex.com](http://www.trumanindex.com). Include the words “letter to the editor” in the subject line of the e-mail. No individual may submit more than one letter a week.

### 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.

### Advertising Policy

For up-to-date information on current rates or to inquire about the availability of classified ads in the Index, contact our advertising department at 785-4319. Our fax number is 785-7601, or you can e-mail us at [indexads@truman.edu](mailto:indexads@truman.edu).

## What was going on in the INDEX?

10 years ago – November 19, 1998

Former FBI agent Robert Ressler, who coined the phrase “serial killer,” spoke to a crowd of more than 1,000 people in Baldwin Auditorium.

15 years ago – November 18, 1993

Northeast Missouri State’s recognition as a top university in “Money” magazine led to a flood of applications. The Office of Admission expected to have at least 4,500 applicants by Dec. 1.