

# Tumminia focuses on nature, students

BY CHRIS BONING  
Staff Reporter

In his 10 years at the University, Eric Tumminia has experienced a lot of change — both as an individual and an environmentalist.

Tumminia, an instructor of English, said he first came to Truman as an undergraduate after having grown up living sustainably with his family in rural Texas County in southern Missouri and being homeschooled for part of his childhood.

"[My] parents were convinced it would be better for them and for their kids to try to live off the land and grow up in the country rather than the city, so I grew up in that sort of context," he said.

Tumminia said he continues to enjoy the off-the-grid lifestyle, although because of that and his fondness for teaching, he often feels conflicted about what he wants to do in life.

"I like teaching, and I like being a part of a university community and being around people who are excited about thinking and learning and making art, but I also really like to be in the woods, and I like living on a farm and living deliberately like my folks were trying to do," Tumminia said. "There's a part of me that wants to move back to the woods, to be honest, and there's a part of me that wants to continue what I'm doing and maybe even pursue a Ph.D."

He added that for now he lives outside city limits near Forest Lake on a rented 10-acre tract of land where he raises chickens and gardens with his roommates.

"[It's] great," Tumminia said. "After a day of school, I can sort of escape ... go somewhere quiet and be with my chickens and play some guitar or go fishing."

Tumminia often maintains a high level of involvement with students and frequently can be seen, for example, lending a hand at the Bike Co-op or helping graduate student Jerry Jones and his wife Michelle sell homemade bread at the farmers market. He said interacting with students is something he seldom thinks about consciously.

"I always have a lot of friends among the students — among undergraduate students — because I think I have a lot of shared interests and

values with many of them," Tumminia said. "I don't have a spouse or a family that takes up a lot of my time. I'm always excited by all the energy and creative spirit of Truman students, and I want to work on the same things and be around them."

He added that he thinks other professors should be around students more often if they have the time and feel comfortable doing so because he has felt rewarded by spending time with students.

"I learn from students in the classroom, and I learn from students outside the classroom," Tumminia said. "Hopefully I teach them a little bit in both of those places, but I learn a lot from interacting with students outside of the classroom."

Going from a student to becoming a member of the faculty has been quite a switch, especially in terms of study habits, he added.

"It's tough — you can be a slacking student and not get those readings done and sometimes not prepare for class too well and kind of sit in the back of class and class will go by," he said. "It will happen, but when you're the teacher you've got to be on top of things — you've got to be the most on-the-ball student, if nothing else."

He said something else that has been a switch is the significant increase in environmental awareness on campus during the time he has been here, citing the creation of the environmental studies minor, the environmental studies conference and the expansion of Environmental Campus Organization as examples.

"I was a member of [ECO] as an undergraduate student, and I remember we'd have meetings and it'd be like three people, and we'd sit around the room and be like, 'Why does nobody else care?' What do we have to do to make people care?" Tumminia said. "Now, ECO is huge."

He said that when he was a student, organizing environmental programs and protests was a slow process, although that has changed in some ways.

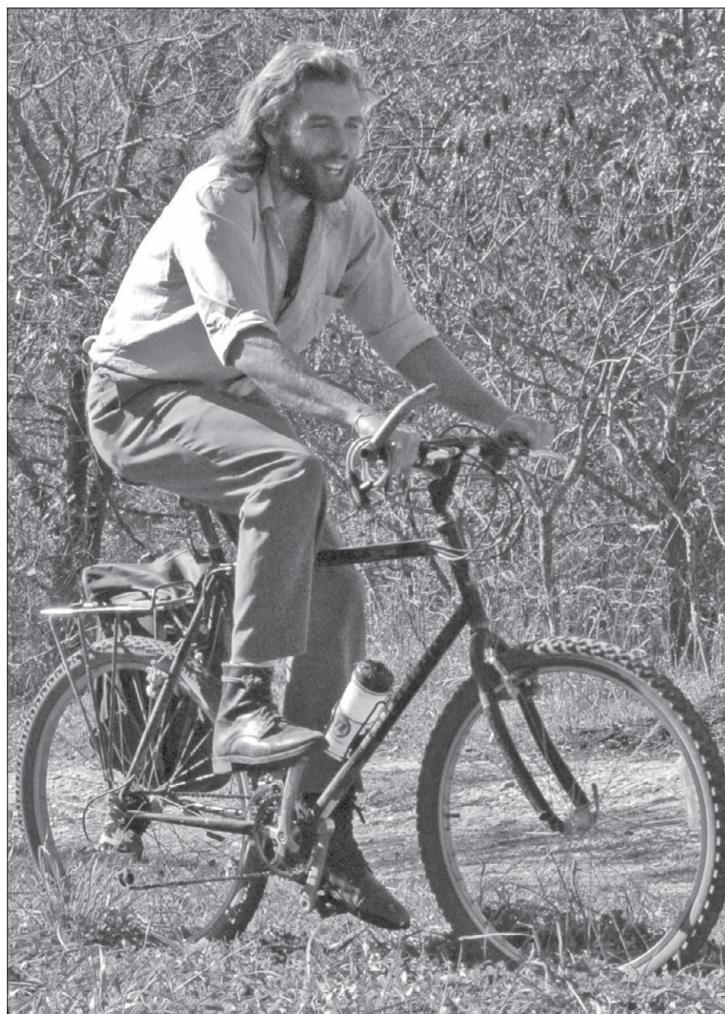
"It does seem like our national environmental consciousness and certainly our Truman environmental consciousness have come a long way in the decade that I've been here," Tumminia said. "It's amazing, really."

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Eric Tumminia  
English instructor

# All eyes on Eric Tumminia

"I'm always excited by all the energy and creative spirit of Truman students."



Krista Goodman/Index  
English instructor Eric Tumminia rides his bike around his home outside of town. Tumminia is a major supporter of the newly established bike co-op on campus, and helped the project get off the ground.

# Housemates find benefits in cooperative living

BY MICHELLE MARTIN  
Staff Reporter

We learned how to share in Kindergarten — some of us cried when our toys were taken away, but others brought those lessons learned to Truman.

The CAFO co-operative includes eight Truman students who live together at 411 E. Jefferson St. and refers to their socially conscious, interaction-based lifestyle, house member senior Brett Wiley said. The reference to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations helps the CAFO members bring attention to the harmful nature of today's industrialized agriculture system while they strive for a communal lifestyle based on positive social interaction, he said.

"Every month we buy in for our living purchases, so all of our food — minus a few special items that we hold dearly to ourselves — [are] a collective," Wiley said.

The co-operative requires its inhabitants to take turns doing specified chores and collaborating to cook meals on certain weekdays in order to maintain interaction on a day-to-day basis.

"I think living on campus at times is kind of an isolated experience because you live with one other person and some people don't even have communication with that person too often," he said. "I just love the community because every time I come home, I come home to friends and housemates, and we're all sharing the same experiences."

Not only does the CAFO co-operative form a positive social network,



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index  
Senior Torin Brenner flips through a notebook he made from recycled cardboard and paper at the CAFO co-operative where he lives.

it also strives to practice social consciousness every day, Wiley said. He said this includes purchasing local foods, buying in bulk, staying environmentally friendly and making, preserving and canning foods.

"The majority of our fruits and vegetables are purchased at the farmers market thus far," he said. "That's why we're preserving food — because we won't have that opportunity come winter."

The co-operative's members host a vegetarian potluck every Friday evening, but none of the house members are fully vegetarian, Wiley said. Instead, he said the members largely adhere to diets of mostly local foods and occasionally eat meat that was lo-

cally or ethically produced or would otherwise be thrown away.

"Everyone here understands that animal products need to be a part of a sustainable agricultural system," he said.

Events hosted by the house, such as the vegetarian potluck, communal brunches on Sundays and occasional concerts, connect to the community-based values of the co-operative, Wiley said.

Senior Sally Hertz, CAFO house member, said cooperative living is a relatively cheap college lifestyle.

"[Most of us] pay \$40 a month for groceries," she said. "That's actually just a little more than \$1 a day to eat, so that's pretty good."

Another benefit is the diversity of the community members and the way everyone can learn from each other, Hertz said. She said everyone has different methods of preparing meals.

"It's been really interesting to see the different ideas people have about making meals," she said. "I feel like one of the best parts of living here is just experiencing everybody's different ways of living."

The environmentally conscious platform of the house has made Hertz more aware of how her own daily habits affect the earth, she said.

"For me, it's really encouraged me to have more environmentally friendly practices," she said. "There's definitely a group consciousness of things, like turning the lights off when you're not using them and unplugging appliances when you're not using them."

Being able to share and experience life with seven other people builds a solid community, which is healthy and important, Hertz said.

"A strong correlating factor with suicide is isolation," she said. "So I guess taking the opposite of that, having a strong social network, means you're a happier person, and I've found that to be true here."

Cooperative living wasn't always easy, senior Dan Fister said. He said that just like most houses, when the group first began living together this fall, people had their differences. However, the co-operative's emphasis on communication largely has alleviated conflict.

"We tried to construct the system where communication would prevent

most problems from getting bad, so I don't know how something would arise that we wouldn't be able to deal with in an honest, direct and open way," he said.

Fister said he has gained important life skills from the co-operative in regard to learning how to deal with conflict.

"It's another great benefit, just learning to understand others and yourself more, by learning interaction skills as far as dealing with problems and tension," he said.

Overall, Fister said he has loved the CAFO experience and would like to continue living communally sometime in the future. He said he hopes another group of students will continue the tradition in another house because most of the co-operative's members are graduating seniors.

"It's great for college life because it's really supportive and helps me be a good student," he said.

Monica Barron, professor of English, said she attended one of the house's Sunday brunches and thought the CAFO co-operative experiment was largely successful.

"They certainly seem happy and they have a vibrant social network, so people are attracted to their experiment," she said.

In addition, the environmentally friendly practices in the house manifest the principles many of the house's Environmental Studies minors learn in the classroom, Barron said.

"To really take that learning out of the classroom and enact it in everyday life is really the whole point of environmental studies," she said.

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