

OUR VIEW

Lack of Braille signs hinders accessibility

It was a long and difficult process but the University is finished renovating the SUB. The paint is dry, the artwork is hanging on the walls and the old Quiet Lounge has a catchy new nickname. But in this case, “finished” and “complete” don’t have the same meaning. The University has sadly neglected its obligation to physically impaired students, substituting photocopies of Braille signs for actual Braille signage.

Granted, the signs are on order and should arrive soon. But accessibility should be a priority for the University, not a last-minute detail.

Given the strides in accessibility the University has made along with renovations — West Campus Suites, Missouri Hall and Blanton, Nason and Brewer Halls all are handicap accessible — we think the lack of proper signage in the SUB is a glaring oversight and should never have been an issue.

Maybe “oversight” isn’t even the right word. The fact that shoddy faux-Braille signs adorn some of the SUB’s restroom facilities means the lack of proper signage wasn’t a simple case of absentmindedness. University officials knew what was supposed to be there but instead of immediately correcting the situation with actual Braille signs, they attempted to hoodwink the community with cheap imitations.

Perhaps we’re being too harsh. It’s possible that the University only was attempting to hoodwink prospective students, affixing the signs as part of a pre-Visit Day routine: Turn on the fountain, hide the trash cans that catch the water from the leaky ceilings and put up the fake Braille signs. But whatever

the case, the lack of genuine Braille signage puts visually impaired students and visitors at a severe disadvantage.

ADA guideline 4.1.2(7) dictates that all “permanent rooms and spaces” in newly constructed or renovated buildings be designated with Braille signage. The University’s compliance with this guideline is exceptional in other areas of campus: All residence hall room numbers, for example, are spelled out in Braille. Making the extra effort to completely fulfill this requirement would make life easier for the visually impaired students who attend the University and make the University more appealing to prospective students who are visually

impaired or have visually impaired family members.

The University shouldn’t stop at satisfying these minimum requirements, either. The ADA guidelines suggest that “in building complexes where finding locations independently on a routine basis may be a necessity (for example, college campuses), tactile maps or prerecorded instructions can be very helpful to visually impaired people.” For a visually impaired prospective student who is visiting campus for the first time, being offered a tactile map upon arrival at the Office of Admission won’t go unappreciated and might even be the gesture that tips the balance in the University’s favor. When it comes to accessibility, anyone who has ever attempted to navigate campus with any sort of physical impairment knows what too little looks like. Now it’s time for University officials to realize that there is no such thing as too much.

Handicap accessibility, including Braille signage, should be a priority — not a last-minute detail.

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.

- A sports teaser on page 1 of the Sept. 25 issue of the Index was incorrect. The text should have stated, “Bulldogs win third consecutive match Wednesday.”
- A news story on page 2 of the Sept. 25 issue of the Index contained a misspelled name and inaccurate title for Tom Johnson, Director of Public Safety. The story also contained inaccurate names for the students involved in the bust. The students’ names were freshmen Eric Andrew Vander Weerd and Trevor Klinkenberg.
- A cutline for a photograph on page 19 of the Sept. 25 issue of the Index was incorrect.
- Clarification: Senior Brett Wiley, Student Senate vice president, misspoke during an interview for a story on page 1 of the Sept. 25 issue of the Index. Student Senate will not be hosting a rally Oct. 3 for students who are against the Board of Governors’ closed meetings about University spending. Wiley meant that students who are unhappy with the policy should voice their opinions at the Oct. 3 Board meeting.



Letters to the Editor

President Dixon deserves greater appreciation

I am dismayed by the media blitz against our University president. Negative opinions from certain milieus of student life were magnified unfairly to portray and influence the whole of students’ opinions, both in the newspaper and on local television. It is unfortunate that we have lost this president: a female leader who has demonstrated incredible courage. Rather than falling prey to the petty biases characteristic of our national TV media, it would be more helpful to consider the fact that this decision of leadership was made behind closed doors, without consultation with the whole of the faculty, student and staff community. This is the most worrisome aspect of recent events. It appears to many long-serving faculty that we are returning to the paternalistic order of former years.

Whether or not you liked Barbara Dixon and the structural changes to this University, we are alarmed that our first and perhaps only woman president will leave this campus without the community as a whole having had the opportunity to discuss the issues and influences bringing this change about. My students asked me if I had participated in this decision, and they were stunned to hear my answer. If the claim of not having eaten with the Greeks is to be taken seriously as a reason to speak against Dixon, then one should bring up the fact that this president, unlike others for many years now, regularly came to eat with the University community in the cafeteria at lunchtime for most of the time she has been here. She regularly sat among a mixture of supporters and adversaries, socializing, discussing her life

experiences, exchanging views and concerns with others.

No, she did not spend her mornings at power breakfasts, and she did not use her attendance at Lyceum events to focus solely on shaking the hands of donors. She participated in events as one of us, as she had for the presentation of Sister Helen Prejean to more than 1,200 students and faculty in the Baldwin Hall Auditorium, an event sponsored by the Newman Center and Amnesty International. I remember vividly Dixon’s personal phone calls and personal trip to the physical plant to get the heat put up to make sure students would be comfortable. Sister Prejean, warmly greeted by Dixon, joked to us that she’d warm up the students with her talk, but that wasn’t good enough for Dixon. Anecdotal? Yes, no more and no less than a complaint that a university president who brought sabbaticals back, who increased funding for facilities, renovation and scholarships and had the courage to move us forward in structural reform should be vilified and demonized in the media for not having shared Greek organizational repasts. Whatever one’s position is on the changes to our University during the past year and a half, she has been our president and we owe her more respect.

*Dr. B. L. McLane-Iles
Professor of French*

Purity rings represent wearers’ personal choice

I was surprised at the misconceptions about purity rings in the column in the Sept. 25 issue of the Index. I wear one of these rings and don’t think the author completely understands them.

I agree that, yes, the comment

made on the MTV VMAs that called people who have sex “sluts” was wrong and judgmental. However, the author was mistaken to assume that Jordin Sparks’ comment represented everyone who wears a purity ring because it doesn’t. I don’t think people who have sex are sluts and choosing to wait until I’m married is a choice I’ve made for myself, not for anyone else.

Furthermore, I don’t think this column presents a fair picture of purity rings or those who wear them. Not all purity rings or the commitments surrounding them are like the weird ones mentioned in the column. For example, I’ve never heard of anyone pledging their virginity to their parents, nor have I heard of a purity ball. I think the author just found the three or four super-conservative Christian churches that actually reinforce this belief. My ring has nothing to do with my parents or them owning my chastity. It is a commitment that I made on my own to my future husband, but more importantly to God. The ring is symbolic, and it reminds me of my commitment.

I also have a difficult time understanding how this simple silver band on my ring finger could be so offensive. Lots of people wear rings. If I really wanted to announce my pride, as the article indicates that we ring wearers do, I would go out on the Quad and do so in a Brother Jed-like fashion (we’ve all seen how well that works). I don’t see how this ring is any more offensive than the kid who wears a Pink Floyd T-shirt to class to show that it’s his favorite band. Again, this ring is symbolic and serves as a reminder for me. By wearing it, I’m not trying to announce anything to anybody.

*Kara Bollinger
Senior*

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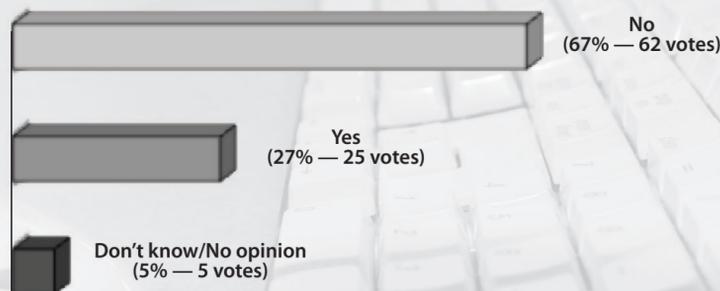
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This week’s question:

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