

OUR VIEW

Dixon's resignation brings little change

Everyone has to deal with change at some point in their lives, whether it's picking a new major, changing careers or simply switching from old to new Facebook. Change can be good or bad. Or, as in the case of University President Barbara Dixon's resignation, it can be not much of a change at all.

We know Dixon's resignation was all the buzz on campus this week. The news came out Tuesday morning, and by Tuesday evening the story had received more than 2,100 reads on the Index Web site. And for good reason:

The president of any organization is its most visible representative, the person who gets all the credit when things go right and takes all the blame when things go wrong. It can be tempting to think that a new president will swoop in and fix everything that's wrong with the University. However, before you plan the end-of-regime celebration and order your "Sayonara, Babs!" T-shirts, we would like to point out that a university president has little power to single-handedly change university policy. As a result, getting a new president won't change much.

President Dixon doesn't dictate university policy in a vacuum. Aside from the obvious oxygen shortage, there is a big, fat, hairy monkey on her back called the Board of Governors. The Board must approve most University operations. It has the final say on big issues like tuition hikes and renovation plans as well as tiny details like increases in the Student Activities Fee. However, because the Board conducts its business in relative obscurity — can you name one Board member other than the student representative? — Dixon gets all the flak or the flattery for what goes down, regardless of whether she had anything to do with it.

In a small community like Kirksville, once someone gets a reputation it's hard to change it. The University's previous president Jack Magruder was very popular — a tough act to follow. On Tuesday, students began to profess their distaste for President Dixon without having any clear idea why, other than the fact that everyone else thought she was terrible, so it must be true. Dixon did play a large role in implementing the controversial University restructuring, but it's a safe bet that many of the students

who cheered when they heard about her resignation were relatively unaffected by this change. We confess that we don't really know what the president does on a day-to-day basis. But we do know that it's

silly to criticize the way someone performs a job when you don't even know what that job is supposed to be.

A new University president won't change everything immediately. Baldwin Auditorium's leaky roof won't magically fix itself overnight. The academic reorganization won't go away. It's not going to start raining lollipops and puppies. Barbara Dixon's portrait will now hang in Pickler Memorial Library and someone else will reside in the sweet crib on Halliburton Street. Other than that, your day-to-day University experience will be remain basically the same.

Keeping in mind the limitations on the University president's power will allow you to form realistic expectations about the next one's ability to affect policy and avoid forming opinions based on the fact that a friend of a friend said the new president sucks. When a new president is selected, it's in everyone's best interest to welcome him or her with open arms — and think of a really cool nickname.

A university president has little power to single-handedly change university policy.

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. 11 issue of the Index was incorrect.



Letters to the Editor

Truman mascot sends wrong message

Today I've been wondering about pit bulls, pigs in lipstick and politicians, and further wondering why the Truman mascot is a bulldog. A mascot (from "mascotte," meaning witch) is supposed to bring luck to an organization through a kind of sympathetic magic — the qualities of the mascot should "rub off" onto the group. So is a bulldog (tenacious, protective, aggressive to outsiders) really the best we can do as a university? I know we've done a lot to make our Truman bulldog cuddly and cute, but there's still a sort of double discourse going on: soft collars holding plush spikes. It's as though we can't decide whether to be menacing or sweet. Think about it.

What should our ideal mascot be? What animal qualities do we want to claim for ourselves as a university? Or as a country, for that matter — think of farsighted and powerful eagles. (Think of Sarah barracudas. No, don't.) I recognize that some potential mascots don't reflect team sports values, so I've crossed hummingbirds, lady bugs, doves, ants and swans off my list of suggestions, even though they symbolize qualities Truman should probably value more than tenacity or aggressiveness. And I recognize that some potential mascots, like wolves, carry stigmas they don't deserve. But there still are plenty of animals to choose from, animals whose virtues I'd rather have rub off on us than those of bulldogs or barracudas. I'd happily go to games and cheer for the Truman Antelopes (speed, grace, agility), Otters (laughter, curiosity, joy), Dolphins (intelligence, play) or even for the Truman Elephants (intelligence, wisdom, grace). But bulldogs are too close to pit bulls, and pit bulls symbolize aggression so strongly that their sale has been banned in some countries — with or without the lipstick.

Betsy Delmonico
Professor of English

Improper terminology insults athletic trainers

In the Sept. 11 issue of the Index, an article regarding the injury to sophomore football player Vanness Emokpae was published in which certain people were mentioned who did not receive the respect they deserved. In the article the word "trainers" is used multiple times in reference to what should have been called an "athletic trainer." As a sophomore athletic training student it is disheartening to continue to read the incorrect terminology, especially in the media.

Athletic training is an allied health profession, not to be confused with personal training. Anyone can become a personal trainer. Nine times out of 10 when I am asked what my major is people respond with, "Oh, so you make people stronger?"

It takes something special to be an athletic trainer, especially in the program here at Truman. The Athletic Training Education Program is a strict, 4-year program that requires national certification to graduate. The students and staff of the Truman Athletic Training Program each put in hundreds of hours with all of the Bulldog athletic teams. Although the athletic training major is only in its second year, it has been a branch of the exercise science department for many years. The profession of athletic training is trying to clear up the skewed view of the public's conception of what an athletic trainer is. Although the sentiment is taken lightly by a majority of the population, it strikes a nerve with a majority of athletic trainers across the country. On behalf of the staff and students of the Truman State Athletic Training Program, I would like to make the general public more aware of what athletic training actually is. The media has the responsibility to make sure that all information is correct before it is released. The Index should fulfill this duty as a respected and awarded publication to give the respect their readers deserve and the truth regarding certain topics.

Justin Irish
Senior

Political groups should run positive campaigns

I have been working on the Barack Obama campaign for more than a year now, and I founded the Students for Barack Obama organization at Truman. I am proud of the campaign we have run at the University for the last year and a half, and we continue to emphasize voter registration and outreach to other organizations that would like to help with the cause. Last week alone, 20 volunteers were able to register 215 citizens without even mentioning support for Barack Obama.

This was not about politics, but rather about engagement. I find it interesting that in its first major event of the year, the College Republicans decided not to highlight John McCain's credentials or clarify Sarah Palin's positions on critical issues, but instead featured a documentary that distorted Obama's views and removed his statements from context. Why the preoccupation

with Obama? Why not do what we have been doing, which is stick to a pro-candidate message instead of an anti-opponent theme?

I don't think it serves the group's best interest, and I am disappointed that although we have not and will not set up any anti-McCain events, the same cannot be said of the other side only three weeks into the semester. So please, let's all agree to run pro-candidate campaigns instead of the polarizing rhetoric that sadly has come to plague national politics.

On a side note, I would like to take a brief minute to address Justin Logan's letter from last week. I am not sure if it is because of ignorance or apathy, but Logan's statement that Obama has never passed a single significant piece of legislation while in the state or national Senate is a total falsehood.

If we are going to debate experience or policy, we can do that. However, outright false statements should be called out and exposed. Not only has Obama helped pass laws increasing tax credits for low-income workers, he also has helped reform a flawed death penalty policy in Illinois. He has worked with Republicans like Richard Lugar to secure nuclear weapons, and he also has worked with other Republicans like Tom Coburn and even John McCain to pass bipartisan legislation concerning ethics reform and congressional monetary transparency.

So Logan, if you would like to find out more about Senator Obama, please let me know and I gladly will help you with the facts so we do not have any other problems with misrepresentations of anyone's legislative backgrounds.

Saed D. Hill
Senior
Students for Barack Obama

History faculty thanks President Dixon

We, the Department of History, wish to thank President Dixon publicly for her courage and leadership during the past five years. She has addressed many long-standing and neglected problems and has improved the University by setting new directions. The administrative restructuring that she achieved (we love being an academic department!) and the curriculum reform she set in motion will produce many positive results in the coming years. Barbara, we will miss you, and we offer our best wishes for all your future endeavors.

Steven D. Reschly
Chair, Department of History

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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 or on our Web site at 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.

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What was going on in the INDEX?

10 years ago ... September 17, 1998

E.C. Grim Hall opens for residents a month late due to renovations to the building.

30 years ago ... September 14, 1978

American Food Management takes over management of the food services in the Student Union Building. Food services previously had been run by the University. The University made the switch for food bought at lower prices, and more flexibility of labor and management.