

## President's visit closes gap yet expectations hang



**Connor Stangler**

In a way, it was our own fairy tale. A nation's confidence in its own financial system crumbles, a people's last vestiges of hope for an economically secure world to die before them, and a student body's fragile happiness succumbs to the pressures of school and work as finals week dawns on a red sky.

Then suddenly, for a few brief moments, Truman students were not so removed from the affairs of the Washington Ivory Tower as President Barack Obama completed the local circuit in his "White House to Main Street" campaign.

Our hero successfully closed the

geographical gap between himself and our own sleepy Kirksville as he made his way to Macon to tour the local biorefinery. But as he rode past us and into the sunset, he left in his wake an intellectual gap the same size it had been before his arrival on the Midwest scene.

I applaud Obama for his attempts to ease the fears of his nation. He is committed to a set of principles that includes being "a strong proponent for increasing the national supply of home-grown American renewable fuels as an alternative to foreign sources of oil," according to [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov). He has lent a helping hand to farmers and expressed his concern for their plight by visiting a local farm in Macon.

But Kirksville is not the proverbial sleepy community. We are aware of the difference between actual reality and political realities. Actual reality: Political impossibilities are often good ideas. Political reality: Political impossibilities are unworkable.

The government continues to heavily subsidize ethanol producers. Politically, it's smart. America's breadbasket produces a lot of corn and ever since we realized we have an energy crisis ethanol has become the fuel of choice. But in our hurried attempts to find something that was anything but oil, we might have committed ourselves to a fool's errand.

According to Bradford Plumer of "The New Republic," three-quarters of all federal renewable-energy money goes toward ethanol, even though several studies and experts, including Dennis Keeney of the University of Iowa, have said that "ethanol from corn will do nothing to boost net energy supplies." Corn-country senators, even conservatives, continue to support ethanol as an answer, even though those subsidies are not free-market solutions.

Obama made the rounds not only because we're "Main Street," but because it was politically shrewd. Iowa is an important primary state, and Missouri is consistently one of the most highly contested states in national and local elections. Opposition to or even an

absence of support for ethanol in this region could mean political death. But an injection of political impossibility could do more to help us than to hurt him.

There are alternative biofuel solutions. Even a simple acknowledgement of the limits of ethanol, while not politically preferred, would bring us one step closer to purging excessive hype from our discussions about this topic.

We refuse to acknowledge the simple facts, the political impossibilities. Taxes are necessary. Wall Street needs reform. Ethanol is not the solution. We desperately needed health care reform. This doesn't have to be the "Straight Talk Express," just honesty.

Of course, we prize comfort like any other nation. We look for it in our daily routines as well as in our politics. But if Obama wants us to listen more intently than we've listened to any leader before him, he'll have to separate himself from the pack like he promised. Dazzle us with candid reality. Knock us to our knees with earnestness. Our current crisis thrived on the coziness of igno-

rance and habit. Our next one should come with the reassurance that we did everything we could to prevent it. That reassurance begins with the shedding of political taboos we've avoided for a while.

I was ecstatic when I heard President Obama would be mere miles away from campus. I am a firm believer that he has the ability to launch a domestic policy program that will mitigate this current crisis and improve the lives of Americans. I hope for a hero, but heroes don't rely on buzzwords and trite diction. They speak the truth even when it isn't popular to hear. I'm not naive enough to believe that politics doesn't have its foundations in the art of duplicity, but I'll keep hoping that the next time President Obama swings our way, he won't allow us to revel in a comfort that's worth undoing.

*Connor Stangler is a freshman English and history major from Rocheport, Mo.*

### AROUND THE QUAD

#### Do you have a summer exercise plan?



**"I'm a member of the YMCA, and I run almost every day."**

*Alysha Munoz junior*



**"Yes, I plan on exercising when I have the time."**

*Lauren Johnson junior*



**"No, I don't have the time, and laziness is a factor!"**

*Erik Anderson freshman*



**"I won't go to the gym, but I work at a ranch, which is hard physical labor."**

*Kathleen Keough junior*

## Students should do something great



**Zach Vicars**

Students should spend summer doing something great.

One day last week I cut class and went on a bike ride with a friend of mine. We rode 60 miles south that day, greeting Amish folks as they tended their gardens in the morning and passing bass fishermen as they cast their lines in the afternoon.

That evening I said goodbye to my friend — we call him Biscuit — for the summer. He's not heading back north anytime soon. Instead, he's taking a three-week journey to Texas. On his bike. Alone. He's made minimal lodging arrangements, and he didn't even pack extra food. He's just trusting in God that he'll find a way. He's doing something so outrageous, so illogical and so insane that you can't help but admire its brilliance.

And I must admit: I didn't go on that bike ride for the exercise, I didn't wake up early to see the pastoral landscape, and I certainly didn't cut class so I could be sore the next day.

No, I went on that ride because I wanted to be with my friend for just a tiny portion of his unforgettable journey. Even though I might have caught a ride back north after just one day in the saddle, I wanted to be part of something great.

And, really, I think that's what we all want. That's why most of us are at Truman in the first place — because we want to be a part of something great. We come to this place as freshmen, hoping to develop our minds, skills and passions, so that we can leave campus ready to make a difference in the world.

We have ambitions of becoming doctors, lawyers, relief workers or poets. And yet, somewhere down the scholarly road — after a few weeks or maybe a few semesters — we lose sight of our goal. We allow the stress of tests, papers and group projects to weigh us down until school becomes dreaded. Almost out of necessity, we stop chasing our dreams and start chasing a degree. While we once held out hope for a full life, now most of us would settle for a

decent job with benefits.

I don't know about you, but I'm tired of settling. I'm tired of designing my future to suit the fancies of my degree program, my professors or the job market. I'm tired of running after the "American Dream" while ignoring my own dreams and the dreams of those I love. I'm tired of living a life that's less than what I was made to live.

That's why I'm dedicating this last week of the semester, along with the coming summer, to reclaiming the exuberance I had when I first came to campus. I'm going to use this summer to reawaken my hopes for how fulfilling my future could be. I want to imagine myself spending the rest of my life riding bikes with a friend, rather than sitting in an office chair with a quarterly statement. This summer I'm determined to do something great.

In order to achieve this goal, I know I'll still have to be purposeful with my time, because a summer spent playing video games and watching reality TV is just as empty as one spent at a faceless workplace. That's why I decided to take an internship this summer that will help me on what I'm most passionate about.

Still, I want to make sure that I take time to reconnect with my faith, to continue to develop friendships with people who make me want to be better, to wonder at the beauty of nature that is all around me and to consider grad schools or career choices that will help me realize my dreams.

I would encourage all Truman students to do something similar this summer. Do whatever you can to get back that exuberance and passion you once had about learning. Think about where your degree from Truman can take you, not how pretty it will look hanging on your wall. Focus on what provides meaning, not just on what provides money. Spend some time away from the grind of the everyday. Take a 1,100-mile bike trip like my friend Biscuit if you have to. Remember the dreams you had as a little kid — fireman, baseball player, astronaut — and ask yourself, "Why not?" Do something this summer that will benefit others and help you remember who you can be. Whatever you do this summer, do something great.

*Zach Vicars is a sophomore philosophy/religion and linguistics major from St. Charles, Mo.*

## Convenience fee causes inconvenience



**Jessica Catron**

I've never associated Truman with convenience, whether it's the location (out of the way drive from/to anywhere but Iowa), the food (according to the new "cost per meal" calculator, we spend approximately \$9 per meal) or the bureaucratic processes (I have to fill out three separate financial aid documents a semester). But I always thought that when I tried to give them money, they'd accept it.

A new policy that will be instituted this summer by the Business Office will make it harder to pay your tuition — and not because you don't have the money.

This new "convenience fee" will charge an additional 2.75 percent on credit card payments. If you pay the entire amount for tuition and room and board at once, roughly \$6,300, that is a "convenience fee" of more than \$170.

I am sick of Truman nickel-and-diming us. I came here for an education, and every step of the way I feel like I'm getting ripped off. I understand that Truman has

made this decision for a reason. I am well aware that credit card companies charge processing fees in order for stores, restaurants and schools to use them. However, I'm not sure that Truman understands that an almost 3 percent charge on every dollar given to them is unfair to the people paying the bills. This is an obscene amount to charge, considering how prevalent credit cards are.

The banning of Visa (the no. 1 used card within the United States) is another part of this problem. Nearly every bank in Kirksville issues Visa debit cards, as well as US Bank — the very bank that Truman entered into a contract with to pair with the use of our ID cards.

The application of this fine to credit card use alone would be unreasonable, but the charge also applies to debit cards. That's a debit card that came free with your bank account so that you don't have to pay an average of \$30 a year for checks — is the cheapest bank issued checks available in Kirksville.

The fact that banks charge for checks is not Truman's fault, but it is Truman's fault for forcing you to purchase checks or pay a 3 percent charge every time you use your debit card. This might seem like a small issue, but I rarely use checks. If I am forced to purchase them solely to pay my Truman

bill, is that fair to me? Is it fair to waste the money and paper and to provide another way for my personal information to be stolen? If I only write one check every six months, I can almost guarantee I will misplace my checkbook. This could lead to my identity being stolen. This might seem like a far-fetched concept, but a stolen check is more likely to slip through the cracks at my bank than a misused credit card.

This is another reason why I consider giving my bank routing number to the University to be out of the question. A major issue in Truman bureaucracy is the use of student workers and their access to personal information. I trust my fellow students enough, but I am not sure that I want them to have the numbers that could allow them to automatically debit my account.

All of the concerns, fines and bans associated with this new policy mean that my new method of payment for my tuition bill will be withdrawing large bills and paying in cold hard cash. Here's hoping that I safely make it from my apartment to the Cashier's window.

*Jessica Catron is a junior political science major from Warrenton, Mo.*

## Altered spring calendar disrupts student rhythm



**John Hitzel**

I am exhausted. Why does this part of the semester feel so much heavier than usual? What is it that has amplified the tension I always feel in the last week of April?

I've been deep into crunch time ever since I returned from Midterm Break. During every other semester I've experienced — and I've survived seven of them — the crunch usually doesn't hit until the second week of April.

What's different this time? Classes began a week earlier than usual this semester, which was fine with me at the time. I can spend only so much time at home before I get sick of living there

again. School ends early too, and with exam week set as the first week of May, that gives us almost all of May, all of June and July and almost all of August off. That's practically a four-month summer.

The University needs to do something to ensure students have enough time each semester to efficiently manage their course loads.

In the past, summer has not been so long, and I never really wanted it to be longer. However, with classes starting sooner, we get a shorter winter break, the semester ends earlier and the crunch begins earlier too. Summer is longer, but does that balance out the increased stress levels caused by the semester's early start?

I don't know about you, but this shifting the whole semester up by a week or so has really thrown off my rhythm.

I like the week after Midterm Break, when I can ease my way back into being a student and out of break-mode. I didn't get that this semester, and as a result I've

been on edge for far too long. Sure, there's only another week left, and the semester is over for those lucky students who don't have any exams next week. I know this anxiety will pass, but I can't ignore the correlation between my heightened stress level and the semester's altered rhythm.

I would sacrifice that extra week of summer vacation in order to get that week after Midterm Break back, just so I can cushion the start of the second half of the semester. This is the harder, more intense part, when the vast majority of the points are earned and lost. It is when term papers are juggled and grades are solidified or irreparably mangled in a few short weeks that all blur into one big caffeine-guzzling, endless all-nighter.

This last month and a half has seemed very dense compared to past semesters, and I'm actually taking fewer credit hours than I normally do. I have to think that if this monstrous stressor was spread

out over a longer period of time instead of condensed into a smaller one, the stress would be diluted. I could have performed better, as per my own standards, on some assignments that were rushed and therefore suffered.

With that buffer after Midterm Break, I have time to adjust if I can't immediately shift gears into end-of-the-semester, full-time student, make-or-break-my-entire-grade overdrive. With that extra week of classes in May — even if I can't get back into the swing of things immediately — at the very least the deadlines come later, and there's simply more time to invest in big projects. Thinking about it from the perspective of time management, this time warp is a bit of a curveball.

Sure, with this extra time during the semester there would be as much opportunity for procrastination as there is opportunity for proactive work. I try to be honest with myself. I know I'll find excuses to procrastinate. I know

I can't be constantly engaged with the points-collecting game that college has become, because if I don't detach occasionally, I become a nervous wreck and do worse than if I hadn't let myself relax for a bit.

Despite my lighter class load and attempts to de-stress, I have felt way more pressure during this particular post-break period, and I attribute it to the narrower sliver of time that I have had to cram the same amount of work into. I'm not even looking forward to classes being over, because right now, all that represents to me is a deadline for my accumulated schoolwork.

We are an honors college, but let's try not to be soul-murderers. Give me back my normally-paced spring semester.

*John Hitzel is a senior communication and English major from St. Louis, Mo.*