

University must communicate with students



Zach Vicars

The Truman administration should be applauded for the way they kept students in the loop during the selection of President-elect Troy Paino. Even after every other finalist had been eliminated or declined an interview, the University still offered forums, surveys and countless outlets of communication with the student body, making sure we approved of the man who would be leading our University.

I have to admit, the clogging of my inbox with subject lines like "Update from Presidential Search Committee" did get a little annoying after a while,

but I'm thankful Truman remained diligent in asking for student input every step of the way. As the University moves into a future that poses many challenges — in finances, academics and athletics — it is crucial for the Truman administration to continue to keep the lines of communication open with the student body.

The temptation for universities, and all large organizations, really, is to institute change as easily and quietly as possible. Although the Truman administration has been quite transparent in the matter of the presidential search, they have shown a tendency toward secrecy in the past. For instance, think about how quickly former president Barbara Dixon resigned from her post in October 2008, not to mention the enormous controversy about Dixon's consultant stipend. More recently, Truman slipped through a change in scholarship policy affecting all students living off-campus. Effective Fall 2011, off-campus students will not be able to apply extra

scholarship money toward a meal plan or Bonus Bucks. Although this change might ultimately be necessary, it was enacted without any input from the student body at large. At least, I never got the memo.

These stealthy changes in policy might not seem like much of an issue to some, but if the University does not remain vigilant in keeping students in-the-know, you can bet there will be controversy. A clear line of communication between the University administration and its students is absolutely essential. Without it, even a prestigious academic institution can descend into chaos.

For example, I have a friend who attends a liberal arts university near my hometown. Recently, the administration applied a significant hike in tuition rates. The students weren't happy to be paying more, but they weren't angry about the rise in rates. They weren't angry, that is, until construction began on a multi-million dollar mansion for

the university president. That sent students into an uproar. As a result, several students vandalized the building, forcing the university to wall-off the premises and install an expensive surveillance system.

Clearly, both the administration and the students failed to communicate appropriately. Secrecy on the part of the administration led to an irrational outcry on the students' part. Both infractions violate the spirit of academic integrity and respect. If the Truman administration does not remain vigilant in gathering student input about all major changes in policy, our great institution also is at risk of jeopardizing our academic experience.

Therefore, in the future, Truman must continue to be transparent with students with every important issue — even to the point of annoyance, for it is much better that students be barraged with notifications, surveys and announcements than surprised by a hasty change.

In the not-so-distant future, Truman will face many challenges and have important decisions to make. At present, the Truman experience is academically rigorous, athletically diverse and highly affordable. It might be that the University can only sustain two of those three attributes — ultimately, something will have to get cut. So as our University's priorities, reputation and status are hanging in the balance, it is essential that the administration continue to incorporate the student body in every step of the journey toward success. If they do so, the University can only become healthier and more desirable to prospective students. But if they refuse to communicate with us, confusion and frustration are on the horizon for Truman.

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AROUND THE QUAD

How do you plan to spend your spring break?



"Driving to Albuquerque just for fun."

Therese Gerbich junior



"Going home and applying for jobs for the summer."

Matt Engelbart junior



"Writing a term paper for Political Geography."

Heather Armstrong senior



"I'll just go home and hang out."

Megan McDonnell sophomore

Tenure system treats professors unfairly



Jessica Catron

Any political science major will tell you one of the most common problems with the American political system is that after being elected, a politician becomes more focused on being re-elected than on working for their constituents. The same can be said for professors in the university system. When a professor is hired, usually within three years they will be put on 'tenure track' — or will not be, and will most likely have to find another job. Finding another job usually means a move, and the lack of a tenure offer can weigh heavily on the job application process. Imagine breaking up with someone and then never getting a date again because you got dumped. This isn't fair, but it's about as fair as the modern tenure system.

Not to mention the pressure. So much pressure that someone might overreact and seek vigilante justice, someone like Amy Bishop, a Harvard-educated professor at the University of Alabama-Huntsville. According to FOX News, Bishop was seen as an "attractive and friendly teacher." However, others saw her as someone who lacked an ability to "break down difficult subjects for students," a common problem among research-centric professors, even at Truman. Bishop brought a gun to a faculty meeting and shot and killed three of her colleagues and wounded three others after being denied tenure.

I'm sure in Bishop's mind all of her hopes and dreams in academia had been shattered, never to rise again. The weight of tenure constantly weighs on the majority of professors who don't have it. The pressure to impress colleagues, department chairs and students while still teaching effectively is difficult under any circumstances.

There are some supposed advantages to tenure including job security — the ability to hold onto a job if your teachings are viewed as controversial or at odds with the administration, as well as during economic downturns. In addition, it allows the professor the freedom to take sabbaticals to do research without worrying about their position upon return. These are all supposedly very good things, and professors should be allowed to do their jobs and express their opinions without

unfair backlash. Isn't this the way the world wants to work? Shouldn't we hope that modern academia breeds a fairness of ideas without an implemented set of requirements and votes to prove it? The same system can breed complacency. A professor with tenure is allowed to stop working to gain it and will always have a job (given there are no extreme issues). This is most definitely not the case with all professors, but in its essentials, the system is set up to do just this.

The prospects of professors slacking off after they have faced all this unhealthy pressure are an example of why this system needs change. One change could be to the board that determines whether a professor receives tenure. The board is currently made up of their colleagues and department chairs. Student opinion is taken into minute account, but not enough. It raises the question, who better to choose a new colleague but people with their own opinions and views — but who do have the threat of loss of their promotions or raises — with no job to lose because they have tenure?

"Tenure track" can also come with its own provisions. For example, a professor might have to agree to research a specific topic prior to being given full tenure, or they might need to take a mentor to benefit their basic abilities. Not doing these things (or not doing them to the degree wished by the faculty) might mean that, without the professor's knowledge, their tenure possibility has been taken away.

In addition, a "firing review board" could be put in place to protect professors' free speech. This board could be elected, using Truman as an example, as a part of Faculty Senate for equal representation. This would allow for professors' freedom of speech but would not allow them to become complacent and lazy in the classroom.

Tenure programs are designed to help professors, but professors are put under large amounts of stress to "pay their dues" to their colleagues and keep their opinions to themselves long enough to gain entry. Once that is earned, tenure allows professors to rest on their laurels and put in the bare minimum for their students. The entire system is set up to be unfair to professors before and students after. And it's a system that doesn't have to exist.

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

Kirksville would benefit from Fiber



Molly Skyles

When most people think of Kirksville they picture a small college town with a Wal-Mart and lots of snow. Right now, that's pretty accurate. But what if, when people thought of this little chunk of Northeast Missouri, they saw an Internet Mecca, one where everyone was connected by lightning fast Internet speed and had unlimited access? Imagine the benefits.

This magical technology fantasy world could become reality. Google is in the process of launching a new experiment that could change everything we know about the Internet.

Google Fiber, as it's called, is an ultra-high speed broadband network that can deliver Internet speeds up to 100 times faster than we are used to, at more than one gigabyte per second. Google plans to offer this service at a competitive price. Kirksville has been nominated as a potential trial location for the Google service. (See story, page one.)

If Kirksville were selected to receive Google Fiber, it would kick start this town into a new era. Everything would be done quicker and more efficiently with the use of such a powerful Internet con-

nection. The time spent waiting to send an e-mail or open a new document would be drastically reduced. This improved technology would allow Kirksville residents to do all sorts of new things.

New businesses would be able to start and run more efficiently. There would be no more miscommunication with business partners or errors in bookkeeping. With Google Fiber, video chats can be used as a means of communication with virtually no waiting, and all sorts of online sites would be at everyone's fingertips to help a now-foolproof business soar.

Google Fiber also would be an aid to medical advancement. Let's face it, Kirksville is pretty small, and the town probably does not have all available technology or knowledge in each field of medicine. Therefore, improved Internet technology could allow a Kirksville doctor to video conference with another doctor anywhere in the world. No longer would someone need to travel to see a specialist. All of your medical concerns could be conducted via Internet.

Google Fiber would also benefit Truman students, providing us with faster on-campus Wi-Fi. No more aggravated waiting for TruView or Facebook to load. You would be able to check your e-mail and read the latest Blackboard announcement at lightning speed. I can't even count how many times I have just stopped doing my homework because the Wi-Fi in the library would not let me get to Blackboard. With Google Fiber, we wouldn't have a reason

to quit. It would work so fast that productivity might increase.

OK, so maybe that's a stretch, but it will help improve Internet speed and quality. So even if you don't use it for educational purposes, at least your Facebook stalking will be conducted in a more efficient manner.

Also, contact between students and professors could be improved with Google Fiber. Next time there is 10 inches of snow on the ground, teachers could conduct a virtual classroom with video chat. That way, you could learn all about the Gandhi Salt March from the comfort, not to mention safety, of your own home. E-mail would also improve with Google Fiber. Truman's e-mail is so unreliable and slow. However, this new technology would enhance the quality of student/teacher communication, making it easier and faster.

With all the positive outcomes that are possible with improved Internet technology, there is no question as to whether Kirksville is qualified to receive Google Fiber. However, that is not enough. To help improve the Internet for Truman and the Kirksville community, go to the Google Fiber for Kirksville Facebook page and nominate Kirksville as the trial city.

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Nuclear power endangers, not renewable source



Alex Boles

I find it hard to believe that the government sees the words "nuclear" and "clean" as synonymous, at least when renewable energy is involved.

Missouri House Bill 1851 recently changed the wording to include nuclear energy as a renewable energy source with wind, solar thermal sources and dedicated crops grown for energy production, among others. Politicians, including our president, preach the advantages of using nuclear energy such as the large amounts that can be created at

a single plant, but these politicians often overlook disadvantages that could be catastrophic.

Not only does the creation of a new plant take 20-30 years, but also a significant amount of money is needed to build, sustain and monitor every plant in production. President Obama's administration guaranteed \$8.3 billion Feb. 16 to build the first nuclear reactors in more than 30 years, according to an article on CNN.com. The reactors will be built in Georgia and supposedly will create more than 4,000 jobs. I know Obama is adamant about getting people back into the work force, but can't he offer a safer option? Can't he use those billions of dollars toward something that should be advanced, like education or health care?

In 2007, MSNBC posted an article stating that the largest wind farm, funded by billionaire T. Boone Pickens, would cost \$6 billion and

create more than 4,000 megawatts of energy. Obama's budget for nuclear power plants will reach \$54 billion in 2011, according to the CNN article. I think I'll take the wind farms. I like a nice breeze more than a radioactive explosion.

Speaking of explosions, let me discuss another disadvantage of nuclear energy: safety, or lack thereof. The lack of safety while using nuclear energy or even having nuclear power plants is threefold. First, even if you build a 100 percent "safe" power plant, accidents are bound to happen. Would you rather a wind turbine malfunction or a power plant producing radioactive waste malfunction?

Second, according to an article on timeforchange.org, nuclear power plants could be preferred targets for a terrorist attack. If a terrorist feels the need to attack our country and make a huge impact, a nuclear power plant would be a prime

target. Greenpeace.org describes a few out of thousands of devastating instances when nuclear power plants are to blame. I would hate to be the public relations practitioner for those companies.

The third safety disadvantage would be the product of production: radioactive waste. No, not the radioactive waste Alex Mack came into contact with, allowing her to shoot electricity from her fingertips. Radioactive waste has to be contained for long periods of time before it is even close to being considered safe, usually meaning the waste has to be harbored somewhere, causing even more safety concerns.

People are functioning under the assumption that nuclear energy is renewable and will remain that way, which is wrong. The Time for Change articles state that the energy source for nuclear energy is Uranium, which is rumored to last only another 30 to 60 years. If it takes

more than 30 years to produce one nuclear power plant, and Obama's \$8.3 billion loan plans to build two plants, it looks like our "renewable clean energy" source will be long gone and government money will be wasted — again.

I understand that we need to be conscious of global warming and the need for renewable energy sources because of depleting resources, but the sun is still shining, and I still feel a breeze as I walk to class. Throwing money at nuclear energy seems like a great idea because it produces a lot of energy from one plant, but that plant could also devastate the entire country with one mistake. I don't see how the benefits outweigh the costs — are people's lives really worth it?

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